Reflections of the potential role a narrative can play to enhance pedagogic efficacy

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ABSTRACT

Story telling in its most basic form is a means by which a culture passes onto the next generation what they have found to be useful, to be of value, or to be good. Curriculum can be understood as a certain way of telling a story about the world. By contextualising units of work within a narrative, lessons become more meaningful, dynamic and engaging for the learner. The burden of this paper will be explore the importance of narrative as a delivery system for reconceptualising the role of pedagogic strategies within the curriculum. Additionally, to unpack an emergent conceptualisation of the transformative potential of narrative for the storyteller.

KEYWORDS:

Narrative, curriculum, pedagogy,

OUTLINE:

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INTRODUCTION

The promise of a story is something that will make the most unruly junior school class lunge for the mat and sit quietly. Teenagers may not have a preference for subjects, but they will always have a favourite movie or book. How might this natural attraction be exploited for teacher and learning? This paper will explore the efficacy of narrative for engaging young minds and argue for its worth in the promotion of learning and as a powerful delivery mechanism and augmentation of curricula.

TRADITIONAL MODELS OF LEARNING

Curriculum by nature of its prescriptiveness, time constraints and sheer volume, has the effect of reducing education to a delivery system and teachers into glorified messengers of information. The temptation to teach outcomes rather than contextualising knowledge into meaningful interdisciplinary units of work is a reality in this overcrowded time-driven syllabus. Divorced from its context, the data with which we populate our teaching programs render our lessons informative at best. A data- laden curriculum is simply not good enough! Teachers have become the servants of the mighty outcome, transmissionists who blandly dictate the curriculum by transferring facts and then measuring the ‘bounce back’ from the wall of testing. Schools that once took pride in being learning centres have now been transformed into testing centres. The curriculum preoccupation with testing rather than learning has become entrenched into the new curriculum, and compliance has overridden the importance of engagement. Students have become 'fact saturated' and thus know many things, but the problem is that they often do not understand (in the sense of wisdom) very much about the things they claim to know. For example, someone might 'know' how high in metres Mount Kilimanjaro is , but if in the morning when it comes time to climb it and they are still wearing their shorts and haven't packed a lunch, you can be certain that they do not understand the meaning of the factual knowledge

they have been taught. They may know their facts, but they do not understand the ramifications of the facts they know.

And when all the testing is done and the students pass into the world, we can only wonder at the myriad of non-measureable outcomes such as compassion, confidence, creativity, empathy, hope, resilience and self-management that may or may not have been gleaned accidentally by osmosis somewhere between their lectures and assessments.

To achieve our objectives, we have organised students into birth cohorts, and sit them uncomfortably in rows for hours on end. We give them clerical tasks to do and then are surprised when they become distracted by things vastly more interesting than our daily force feeding of facts in which they may or may not have any interest in at all. For the sake of efficiency we compartmentalise the knowledge and skills into disciplines with specialist teachers and subject time allocations so that one cannot steal seconds from the other.

We are more than ready to label a child as ADHD, but seemingly unwilling to diagnose the debilitating condition of 'childhood' upon them. Children often behave in childish ways. Our task as adults is to direct the positive aspects of this developmental stage and teach the way the child learns rather than forcing the child to fit the mould as we have been seemingly forced to conform to political legislature. We don't like it, why should they? "If a child is not learning the way you are teaching, then you must teach in the way the child learns," (Bruetsch, A., 1999, p.4). Disengagement remains the most challenging bane of our school systems and the natural consequence of a data - laden curricula.

Our scholastic lexicon is not always helpful in properly apprehending our role as teachers. 'Education' and 'Teaching' are process words that are narrowly input focussed not unlike 'dieting' or 'driving' which, more likely than not, will elicit probing interrogatives such as 'did you lose weight?' or 'did you reach your destination?' A great orator may occupy a classroom filled with

young people and be engaged in the process of 'Teaching' but it would be wrong to assume that the children are 'learning' without further reflection on what it is that they really need to know.

Education in the broadest sense of the word is the cycle of input-process-output, whereby it is not teaching *per se*, but learning *per se* that is the measure of educational efficacy. The push for this can be seen in the Australian syllabus documents from the shift in the use of the temporal term 'objectives' to 'outcomes' i.e. 'students should', to, 'students will'. This being so, the onus is on the teacher not just to throw the ball but to ensure that the students catch it. A successful lesson taught to one class may need to be drastically altered or even abandoned for a different group, despite the fact that the teaching remains the same on measures of validity and reliability. This directs us to the reality that understanding the curriculum is secondary to an appreciation of pedagogy and the learner. Knowing a little more than the students know about Ancient History is not enough -it is only one of many prerequisites. Knowledge of human beings (what motivates them, what inspires and excites their creative intellect) is a far more urgent precondition for classroom success. It is a human system not a data system.

A successful exponent of 'Learning' will know exactly what their class is capable of, what their interests are, what resources are available in their local community. They will know when their students are engaged and precisely when they begin to lose them and whether their disengagement is due **to** uninspiring teaching, room temperature, seating arrangement, or an overnight excursion the previous day. And should they perceive that a lesson is losing momentum, they will know exactly what to do to bring it back on track. Should the electricity fail i.e. lights, computers, data projectors, they will know how to exploit the circumstance as an opportunity rather than a problem to be solved. Should it begin snowing outside they will be more than willing to drop their planned teaching program in order to turn the situation into an adventure.

Children are learning animals. Armed with the word “Dat?” and a well-directed finger, a one-year-old moves about any environment on a systematic fact finding mission. This lasts from the time the child gets up to the time he lays down with a slight slowing down at meal times. Surely, it would take far more ingenuity to quash this innate drive to learn than to direct and augment it? Students are innate apprentices; they don’t need to be taught how to learn, but rather they need to have learning contexts which are balanced and systematised. Sadly, when learning takes place, it is often despite our practices rather than because of them. Our current education system ‘schools’ our innate capacities out of us. We do not need to assist students in learning as much as we need to just stop being boring -perhaps the saddest label a teacher can append to themselves. We cannot necessarily make a child learn, but we can certainly snuff out any intrinsic motivation they may have had towards getting to know the world better.

> “You need to engage them, you need to peak their imagination, to fuel their creativity to drive their passion. For this you need to get them to want to learn, you need to find points of entry –that’s the gift of a great teacher (Robinson, K., 2013).

THE STORY SO FAR

Story telling has undergone changes of form across time but its purpose and message is still the same: this is what we have found to be useful, to be of value, to be true. Narrative is an historical relic, a Lamarckian artefact imbuing the ghosts of the past with flesh, voice and the momentum to drive that which is ancient into the present. Stories permeate all aspects of our lives. “They make us laugh, cry, reflect, imagine, lose ourselves . . . In the broadest sense, a narrative is an account provided by a narrator of characters and events moving in some pattern over time and space.” (Smith, D. & Shortt, J., 2002, p.69).

Regardless of whether it takes the form of story, script or the medium of monologue, books, magazines, theatre, television, movies or internet; everyone connects with narrative. We find them in

DVD bins and theatres around the world. We prioritise time to hear them, to connect with them, to share them, regardless of distance or time constraints. We look to stories to encourage us, to make us laugh, to infuse life with meaning and provide us with heroes to look up to and model our own lives after. Since time began we have whispered tales in caves, shared them across campfires and shouted them from the clifftops of the world! 'Once upon a time' has become a linguistic marker that transcends time, calling us to impossible adventures.

The simple structure and movement of story as it advances through the predefined cycle of Orientation, Complication and Resolution resonates deep within us as it mimics the natural rhythmic ebb and flow of our own lives. Our interest is engaged during the orientation, **and** our imagination sparked through the complication and our applause deafening at its resolution. We lose fewer facts when information is infused through narrative. Story imbues them with mnemonic traction coding and structuring our experiences. The natural winding trail of the story reveals remembered facts in chronological order at each turn. One cannot arrive at the complication if the binary opposites are not recalled, nor rise triumphantly at the story's climactic finale if cause and effect are lost to the mind.

Our lives are both formed and informed by the stories in which they are located. We choose, are chosen and are composers of story. It is no coincidence that upon attending an initial visit to an Alcoholics Anonymous visit, you are required to state you name and concede your condition. "I am Igor and I am an alcoholic". Interestingly enough, it would seem that the first step in taking hold of your life, of changing it and becoming the protagonist (or hero) **who** is **ready** to accept ownership for your own story regardless of its current state.

We also identify with the temporal nature of narrative as our lives follow the same patterns: where we came from, where we are now, and where we are headed (as well as encouraging us to embrace the transitions in-between). Narrative is therefore more than just a search for meaning or destiny; it orientates and drives us towards a destination.

> " . . . a story is more than a collection of timeless pieces of information because it moves from past to future, from memory to vision. It can therefore offer us not just individual items to consider, but a sense of direction, and orientation with time and history, an image of where we have come from and where we might be headed" (Smith, D. & Shortt, J., p. 98).

Furthermore without this 'direction' found in a guiding core narrative Smith and Shortt discern a potentially tragic situation.

> "Deprive children of stories and you leave them unscripted, anxious stutterers in their actions as in their words . . . lacking a sense of how life should go; it is perhaps more common for individuals to end up 'mis-scripted', presented mainly with unhealthy narrative models for life" (Smith, D. & Shortt, J., p.71).

If we don't give children a story they will find one. If we don't provide them with healthy characters and heroes they will seek them out down at the skate park. "In the post-modern world of subjective experience the young are "crying-out" for a personal story which will give meaning to their lives and a sense of transcendence which gives meaning to life beyond themselves" (Blanch, H., 2003). Could not our teaching and learning be rendered with a healthy amount of meaning, purpose and direction? The narrative we are seeking is one that will supply them not just with objective facts, but a set of core values onto which they might graft and scaffold their lives.

CURRICULUM CONTROL

In envisaging narrative as a delivery system for curriculum, it does not mean the 'telling of stories' per se (although it does include this) but rather the patterning of our planning after a narrative structure. This paper makes the presumptuous leap that stories in their various forms are not just recreational activities, nor are they to be considered something we 'grow out of' as infant learners, but that there is a potent and distinctive connection between narrative structure and the way we assimilate knowledge and develop skills.

As education has evolved and increasingly surrendered itself to a top-down system of control, a tipping point was reached in favour of compliance, assessing, reporting and overcrowded syllabus documents with unrealistic timelines, at the expense of an engaging tale to stimulate creativity, deep learning and retention. We have forsaken the contours of story for rote learning. Now, many of us have lost the art of oral tradition. We struggle to sequence activities much less regale the hearts of those entrusted to our campfires. We need to relearn the art of storytelling and abandon our mechanistic teaching systems. To show our children how to find direction and destination in their own stories and, more importantly, to become heroes of their own modern day epic.

The ironic truth is that teaching via a top-down system emasculates the very essence of what education ought to be. Story inoculates against a surprisingly large number of common problems and criticisms of our modern classrooms: lack of engagement, structure, differentiation etc. A curriculum based on such a foundation is incompatible with a bland mechanistic delivery system. It naturally differentiates and expands itself along the continuum of Blooms Taxonomy and across Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences as students locate themselves within its pages and create individual responses in their own imagination. It brings light to bear on the hidden and null curriculum rendering our prejudices and limitations self-evident. Other potential benefits include:

i) Story is internally driven. Extrinsic motivation may be more important initially but intrinsic is more sustainable, multifaceted and functionally useful.

ii) Traditional mathematic-logical testing is arguably narrow and elitist in nature. The depth and breadth of a story-formed teaching program addresses many traditional non-measurables making it accessible to younger students and the less intellectually able.

iii) Narrative draws our attention to the weakness of the unbalanced concrete to abstract, known to unknown, simple to complex and the objectives-content-testing-evaluation teaching cycle, which leads to a mechanistic way of thinking. " . . . we need, for the educational benefit of children, to reconstruct our curricula and teaching methods in light

of a richer image of the child as an imaginative as well as a logico-mathematical thinker" (Egan, K., 1988, p.17).

iv) Learning results in a permanent change in behaviour –not merely the acquisition of knowledge. It must touch the heart and not just the intellect. If it engages the mind but not the emotions there is the potential to imbue with head knowledge at the expense of simple appreciation at best and indifference to human suffering at worst. "Taking a narrative approach to teaching encourages students to relate taught content to their own experience and to understand the experiences of others….." (Parish, A., 2012, p.4). It provides children with cause to emotionally invest in their lessons.

v) Children are able to engage with story at a very young age. They have an early understanding of fundamental causation and resolution allowing us to introduce concrete rather than abstract concepts from the start of schooling. They can deal with story, they are good at story and yet we continue to bombard them predominantly with mathematical and logical concepts which they struggle with rather than using their natural creative strengths as a means of assimilating knowledge.

vi) Recall of knowledge is improved when it is applied as evidenced by the increasing number of first hand practicum mandated by the Australian syllabus in the latter years of schooling. At its heart narrative is an evidence-based approach to education. Story naturally contextualises information through the contours of real world situations. The onus is then ours to discern what we want our students to remember long after the tests are over, and what stories we will use to get them there.

vii) Narrative requires a holistic education that is multifaceted and interdisciplinary rather than a fragmented collection of isolated subjects. In this way, it is more authentic of the world of work our students will one day populate.

viii) Teachers concerned with the diffusion of objective facts sooner or later find themselves confronted with, "Why do I have to do this? Why is this important? How could this stuff possibly be useful in my future?" Narrative will contextualise and infuse courses with meaning for students and teachers may never again have to apologise or justify the ongoing existence of their subject areas.

In summary, Egan proposes that we see curriculum as a "story told by teachers, a story composed of all the little stories associated with the various areas of learning . . . an alternative to seeing curriculum in the traditional 'assembly line' way in terms of aims, objectives, content, method and evaluation" (Egan, K., 1988, p.29). Hence, "As teachers are our professional story-tellers, so the curriculum is the story they are to tell" (Egan, K., 1988, p. 14). It would seem wise to incorporate the 'story units' of our courses within the larger narrative of syllabus and curriculum. Similarly, Rice encourages teachers to "…..design interesting and engaging lessons as if they were mini-plays or narratives in themselves……a writer must keep the reader interested in exactly the same way you keep a student engaged in class-by making them think, by building knowledge slowly or by surprising them" (Rice, B., 2012, p.5).

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There is a shift taking place in education - a teaching asymmetry, whereby knowledge is both free and freely accessible. All is known and no information is hidden from our students. Ownership of information and arguably learning is now with the students. We are no longer the gatekeepers of learning and the option of being a transmissionist practitioner no longer exists. We are guides, facilitators or better still, storytellers!

Government legislated Curricula represent finite sets of knowledge that, once defined, grow more and more obsolete. Essentially, in our syllabus documents we find a beginning, but it is rarely never be more than that. Through the narrative structure and the power of the internet, students

finally have the means to see the stories introduced by curricula through to their end. To write their own questions, and to unravel the convoluted 'complications' of their connection with their literature and the world, while also arriving at their own conclusions, signals the birth of an insightful learning enterprise in which their heuristic exploration reflects both their reservoir of knowledge on the one hand and the theoretical edifice within which they have the chance of developing codes of understanding and wisdom emancipated from the conformity of the conventional status quo. Curricula can no longer encompass the entirety of learning. We will show our children how to search, discriminate and to ask good questions that reveal the truth about humanity. To discern what is good, noble and true, and to build a better world rather than to mindlessly perpetuate our intellectualised mud huts of conformist mediocrity represents a pedagogic advance of paramount importance. Students can be both the passenger and the driver of their own learning if we give them the freedom and flexibility to be involved in curriculum planning. On the scenario, we propose here, many teachers will need to teach less in order that our students might finally learn more.

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Print defines curriculum as, "All the planned learning opportunities offered to learners by the educational institution and the experiences learners encounter when the curriculum is implemented" (Print, M., 1993, p.9). This suggests that curriculum is more than the transmission of objective facts. It is arguable that the totality of these 'experiences' constitutes a visionary curriculum reminiscent of a 'world view' ideology embraced within the confines of the emancipated learning community which developed it. Such a community uses 'curriculum' to transfer their values and beliefs to the next generation, to pass on their intellectual and spiritual heritage. As such, "The school is a specialised community in which the larger community preserves and passes on its cultural memory. Education is a matter of passing on and of nurturing students in a shared memory, incorporating them into a shared story" (Bolt, J., 1993, p.3).

Smith endeavours to make the following connection, “Curriculum can be understood as a certain way of telling a story about the world. We need to think of story not as illustrations but as curriculum and therefore how do we relate the biblical story to curriculum” (Smith, D., 2005). Similarly, Egan identifies story as an invaluable model for planning teaching that encourages us to see lessons or units as good stories to be told rather than sets of objectives to be attained (Egan, K., 1988, p.2).

NARRATIVE AND THE PEDAGOGY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

More importantly, how might God’s story, be brought into our classrooms? When we anchor ourselves in the Biblical narrative and discern meaning, purpose and vision as individuals and as living communities, how might the gospel transform our methodology, practices, policies and curriculum? There are many plausible approaches to articulating the potential role that can be played by narrative in the context of Christian Religious Education. However, to keep this paper within manageable bounds, we shall focus on one example of what this might mean, with the aim of our returning to this topic in a future publication.

> “Recognizing that stories are the pre-eminent means by which we make sense out of our experience, and realizing that thanks to divine revelation Christians have access to the story by which all stories are Judged, a Christian school curriculum that tells the Great True Story and all true derivative and supporting stories is the only way for Christian education to help students make sense of their experience” (Bolt, J., 1993, p.5).

What precisely then is the ‘Great True Story’ or ‘God’s Story’? It is the narrative of God and his dealings with his creation and the sins of humanity, through the Fall, Redemption and looking forward to Renewal by way of Jesus' Crucifixion, and his Resurrection. The Christian God of the

universe is characterised by the unfolding revelation of His plan to restore creation to Himself through the atoning sacrifice of his Son Jesus.

At its inception one of the guiding principles of Christian Schools Australia (originally set up as Christian Community Schools) was that the message told in the Christian home and in the Church would be the same as that told in the school. If our prime directive is to ensure these three narratives are congruent, then we cannot fabricate our curriculum with anything less than God's Story. If the biblical narrative is to become our World View in and outside of school, then this is a fundamental, non-negotiable requirement for the Christian Community. Blanch suggests, "We have a Christian school when the gospel is inseparable from the curriculum" (Blanch, H., 2003).

As identified above, narrative encourages us to embrace the past to learn from it and to identify who we are and how we came to be here. Not that we are suggesting that we should live in the past, but we submit that the past has much to teach us about how we should be living now and in the future. Our position is that by understanding the past and the mistakes humanity has already made, we are afforded a blessed opportunity to take a different path to find the best version of ourselves within the context of how we choose to live in the future.

More importantly, how might God's story, be brought into our classrooms? When we anchor ourselves in the Biblical narrative and discern meaning, purpose and vision as individuals and as living communities, we can better appreciate how the gospel might help us to transform our methodology, practices, policies and curricula in ways that reflect our growth. In this sense we can use the past to build a new future and in turn to provide a purpose for now and a vision for the future. No secular curriculum can approach anything with the depth or breadth of this treatment.

> "A good Christian school curriculum draws significantly from the wisdom of the ages, good teachers drink deeply from the wells of tradition, and students are incorporated into a story of the

past, present, and future of God and his people. Incorporated into this story, students are given a memory, a vision, and, in this way, a mission" (Bolt, J., 1993, p.4).

Most importantly, we are in the business of teaching about truth, and the truth is that God permeates all there is. Our history is God's history –'His Story'. Some scholars argue that through Science, we discover the laws that God has set in motion, and when we understand this theological and moral template, we are transformed and sanctified.

JN 1:3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made (New International Version).

The world and everything in it including education is dependent on God and cannot be separated from Him. Courses constructed from secular and Christian principles, like two boats leaving a port together on slightly different bearings, will initially appear to be heading in the same direction, but by the time they have travelled a few hours it will be obvious they are on different courses. Christian Education offers more than a destiny it offers a destination –a better one!

"The battle in Christian education in the next decades will, I suspect, be less about abstract philosophies and psychologies of education than about who tells what stories to our children" (Bolt, J., 1993, p.6). As long as there are competing narratives that negate God's story, the secular world can continue in the vain hope that our conscious minds are answerable to no one, and that the voice that speaks into our selfish, materialistic, sinful and debased lives will remain silent.

"If one story can judge another through its contrasting shape, then the distinctive contours of biblical narratives may call into question some of the stories about life which implicitly underpin the school curriculum"(Smith, D. & Shortt, J., p.87). The bible provides us with stories that cause us to reflect, encourage, challenge and re-evaluate our lifestyles. A natural result will be the transformation of our communities into ones that witness to the world of the truth and strength of the gospel message.

Narrative also provides us with a clear mechanism for the selection and organisation of content. “Everything in the story is focussed on the central task . . . Stories then have a clear means of determining what should be included and excluded” (Egan, K., 1988, p24). It thereby assists in the curriculum generation process and ensures it is not content driven. Narrative facilitates the move from principles to practice showing us what to teach and how to teach it.

In summation Boyd concludes, “It would seem that our motivating story (the secular individualistic narrative) is no longer adequate, and as educators, teachers and parents we must engage with urgency in listening to our hearts and confronting the choices available to us” (Boyd, A., 2001, p.55). As such, he acknowledges a primary concept that is often overlooked: it is not a void we are seeking to fill but an inadequate humanistic ideology that we are resolving to overthrow and replace.

When we enrol students, we invite them to become part of the story of our colleges. A deliberate attempt should be made to tell and retell these stories. More significantly, as we indoctrinate students within our halls, the meta-narrative can instil in students beneficent blessings of integrity and dignity, which act as a filter (reference) determining which sub-narratives they will choose to take on and which to discard. It may not be a silver bullet panacea to our modern educational woes, but it will organically gather many of the desired characteristics we look for in our graduates and preclude undesirable and unhelpful traits in beginning teachers.

IMPLICATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

A learning community built to any extent on the use of narrative as a delivery system for curriculum implicitly understands that within its walls stories will be made, shared and rewritten by individuals and groups. They must be given a space and a voice to facilitate this. These might be summarised as:

- Caves –places where students can work on stories in private without distraction.

- Campfires –opportunities for students to share their stories and hear feedback from peers.
- Clifftops –the ability to publish finished stories be it via hardcopy, email, blog etc.

LIMITATIONS OF NARRATIVE

The inherent advantages of narrative do not come without complications. Narrative may provide us with an efficient tool for the inclusion or exclusion of content as Egan suggests, but it can be problematic forcing all the outcomes for a particular curriculum unit into story form without it seeming somewhat contrived. What if mandatory syllabus content is identified as that to be excluded? What if it is incompatible with our core narrative, should we just tack these outcomes onto the conclusion of a unit like orphaned facts after the story book has closed?

The use of the 'narrative pattern' necessitates that " . . . our model needs to provide some way of ending a lesson or unit that has something more in common with the way stories end than with ending because we have "covered" all the content identified as relevant" (Egan, K., 1988, p. 31). Some narratives are necessarily open ended and the subject matter at hand does not always 'round-off' as neatly as we might hope for.

Because story is powerful it can also be misused. Narrative empowers us to use untruths but because it's 'in a story' it still 'works' on some level and will be accepted as our emotions are raised and the learning blinkers are lowered into place. How many of us cheered at the end of Titanic when Kate Winslett was reunited with Leonardo Decaprio? The story was actually about a rebellious daughter who, despite being betrothed, had an affair out of wedlock for a couple of days with a stranger. Then after dying she was reunited NOT with her husband to whom she had had several children, but with the stranger she had enjoyed a 'dirty weekend' with! Why were we so easily fooled? Why did we cheer? Because the script, the cinematography, the lighting, the music and Leonardo's billowing blonde fringe told us to! Crocodile Dundee's narrative was not far from this

storyline. As a potent instrument for the manipulation of 'truth' narrative can become self-serving. We tell the stories that present the truths that we want to convey and unless they are identified and corrected, they will continue unchecked rendering our teaching contaminated with erroneous facts and misdirected instructions for the next generation.

Although God's Story is central to our beliefs and practices we must not allow it to stop us from exploring other Christian methodologies that might be used in conjunction with narrative (such as canonical and metaphorical approaches etc.), nor should it blind us to its limitations when implemented without Godly wisdom or attention to the finer aspects of good pedagogy.

Smith and Shortt draw our attention to several pitfalls in using narrative that we need to be aware of:

> "…the ability of the biblical narrative itself to become self-serving, to confirm our own injustices, selfishness and narrow mindedness (Smith, D. & Shortt, J., p. 91). This is true only when we consider individual narratives separate from the entire meta-narrative of Scripture.

And yet within the framework of the biblical narrative there is a mechanism of correction, self-reflection and of maintaining transparency in our teaching methodologies, practices and beliefs. " . . . It (the bible) invites us to consider how sin may affect our thinking as well as our doing. What's more, it contains within itself examples of stories, even biblical stories about God being distorted to serve our own interests" (Smith, D. & Shortt, J., p. 93).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Although beyond the scope of this paper, the authors wish to encourage more research into the area of narratological transformation on a personal level. This involves an intentional shift, on the part of the individual, from listener to storyteller and not just any story but the story of our lives –the testimony that shapes our identity.

In order to share our stories, we must necessarily 're-member' the events. The implication being that we do not simply call up memories and recount them by rote, but that we reconstruct and reinvent them at each retelling (Crain, 2007, p. 234). It follows then that the tendency of human nature to embellish the narrative is by no means a deceptive 'sleight of hand' but a natural literary rendering device that both the storyteller and the hearer anticipate and encourage. This affords a valuable opportunity for educators –to not only instruct students in the delivery of personal testimony but, in Corcoran's terminology (2007), to provide an invaluable tool to 're-story' their lives.

When present reality meets a fictional potential –a 'faith gap' emerges that imagines a preferable variation of a future self. A transformational emplotment were the inertial truth of our current self and the story formed identity of the superior other, vie for our future. According to Crain, "People 'live' stories, and in the telling of those stories, reaffirm them, modify them and create new ones" (P. 244). Provided the auto- biographical storyteller can put aside the inertial assumptions and volatile memories of their past self, they can begin to shift from the position of 'reader' to 'writer' of their own narrative - to experiment creatively with a plot shift. Notions of Streib's 'it could be otherwise' (1998) come to the fore as they begin to move beyond the limitations of past stories and, as intentional actors, start shaping their personal narrative in liberating, life giving directions (Espinoza, 2013, P. 434).

The limitations of this paper preclude the addressing the following equally compelling areas:

- The potential for narrative to impact positively on the Null and Hidden curriculum. How might the intellectual inertia of our subversive agendas and alliances be negated or brought into the light by story?
- The potential for the shared story of a learning community to motivate and direct its decision making. How might it help or hinder our sense of ownership and investment in our organisations. How might it inform our marketing from the perspective of

inviting potential enrolments to embrace our story and to write the next chapter with us rather than treat enrolment as a cold strategic numbers game?

Conclusion

Walter Brueggemann points out from Deuteronomy 6, "whenever the young ask 'what does it all mean?", the response of the older generation is to tell the story of what God has done, is doing and will do and how Israel is called to participate in, not spectate at this drama" (Brueggemann, W., 1982, p.56). It is clear that God's Story holds the answers to the fundamental questions of a child: Who am I? Where am I? What do I do? This is the story that our communities need to pass onto the next generation. We need to develop narrative that will necessarily form and inform the curriculum of our schools. It is incontestable that Narrative can serve to provide a powerful religious heuristic to transform the policies, practices and pedagogies within our educational communities, but to do this we have to work together as a committed community of people who are relentless in their mission of making the world a better place.

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