

In Augustine's words:

For it is one thing to see the land of peace from a wooded ridge... and another to tread the road that leads to it.¹

As an educator, my role is to engage with people who are in these communities. If I'm good, I listen to them, and help work out where they're at, so I can help guide and equip them for their next step. I need to understand and hear their story.

To be any good at this role, you have to be passionate, qualified, experienced and constantly learning. You have to love people and take the time to know them. And you have to be committed to this learning relationship, because it is a journey that takes more than one conversation, with more than one person, over years and lifetimes, not minutes and days.

It is an honour and enormous privilege to have deep and immediate access to the most private core of family lives. Most educators, indeed like most ministers, do not take this for granted, and we do not view it lightly. We are cautious and gentle with what has been entrusted to us. In the words and sentiment of Yeats, our families place their dreams, their greatest loves under our feet, and we must tread softly because we tread on their dreams.

You also have to know your limits in this role. Although I may be good educator, and love what I do, I can't use this confidence to tell people how to live their lives. Nor

So this is the framework. Within this context, we now ask, what it is that we're seeking to do. It is a good to ask how we measure success, and what those measures of success might be. From my perspective, having thought about this for some time, while it is a good question, it is also a la

true human response; stacking the numbers. He requested that any teaching staff being sent over from England be strongly of the Anglican faith.

Thus from the founding days, Australia's education system has been marked by denominational sectarianism, where there was a dual purpose of education - to meet an educational need and to further the presence and influence of the established church. In practice, this meant that for the first half of the 19th Century, the Church of England refused to be associated with other Protestant groups, and the Roman Catholic Church refused to allow the teaching of non-Catholic views on the teaching of the Bible in school.

The result was that schools were established

My fear is that we are again in an era where the battle for denominational presence in our educational system is shaping approaches to new schools and the treatment of long-established and successful ones, and that in so doing, churches are setting their own criteria for what it means to be successful in Christian education.

In the last fifteen years or so, with the abolition of the 'New Schools Policy', new non-government schools have been established, with minimal government criteria but receiving significant funding. The new schools have been established in city areas and along growth corridors to meet population growth demands and to spread the influence of the church. The policy abolition benefited schools organised as part of a system, rather than as independent non-government schools. Growth and investment in education, in new schools, on behalf of churches has raised questions about other church assets: those long-established, seemingly prosperous independent schools.

As this school we sit in testifies, some of the educational institutions established by the churches in the century before last, have endured and flourished under the leadership of men and women of faith. They have invested in educational assets that h

Success

ratio of Christian to non-Christian families, are our teachers behaving the way we think Christians should behave on the weekend?

And it's about now our theology starts to get quite wobbly.

Apart from anything else, success has never been measured on these terms in the Bible. And if we're going to start measuring and trying to control the faith of people, it is also worth remembering that humans are notoriously poor at judging each other and assessing each other's



may never be the same, in time a new normal will come. It is intensely personal and individual and real.

Have I been judged successful by others? Likewise, I can't tell you. I hope so.

I can tell you that my harshest critics, by a country mile, are Christians.

The criticism is real but is it valid? Just because I don't understand it doesn't mean it's wrong. So I look at the source thinking I could understand it if it came from other faiths, or from those who don't believe in any God. Ironically, I get no such criticism from non-Christians, at least not on this scale, but instead a sense of thankfulness for kindness proffered, grace extended. They accept my motivation for what it is – a

Obviously, I do believe that Christians should run schools, and teach in schools, and express their faith, without fear or favour, in any manner with which they feel called, bearing in mind that they are the face and heart of God to a generation who know little, if anything, about Him, and who are unlikely to ever step foot inside a church. There is a huge responsibility here. And I don't believe we can do it alone.

I believe that local churches, in the words of Bill Hybels, are the hope of the world. Schools cannot and should not be fulfilling the role of the church, any more than churches should be taking over the role of the school. The church can support and love families in context, in a community, in relationships, in a way that schools rarely have the licence or the capacity to do. Churches are God's gift to us and we are not seeking to undermine or take that away. But the church's role is not our role, even though we serve the same God.

I don't believe that churches should be so actively involved in setting the educational agenda fobns s Tc 45ob

relationships matter and the quality of these relationships determine the success of any school but particularly Christian schools. Relationships are the oil that make the educational cogs turn and help give meaning to our lives. Without them, life is dry and unpalatable and going nowhere.

In preparing this talk, I ran the idea of what I was thinking, past a few other Heads of Independent schools. I'm not claiming that my perspective reflects the views of other Heads, and indeed they are such a diverse group, reflecting widely disparate schools and people, that consensus on any topic is unlikely! But it is good to think things through from a different perspective. While not a huge sample, one Head was cautious of my thesis and the offence it might cause, another didn't understand what I was getting at, and the other three made comments along the lines of: 'go for it – lob the grenade and run!'

These are all good, strong Christian men and women, and I don't believe any of us want anything other than strong Christian schools, supported by strong Christian churches. I also ran this past a Minister, desperate to check I was not offending. I'm not sure I've done such a good job here, and if this is the case, I ask you to look past the words, and focus on the spirit of the message. The church needs to know that we love it, that we are supportive of it, that we will do the right thing by our God and bring His Spirit to all that we do and say, as best we can. But we are not in education as an undercover business for the church. It is not our job to proselytise nor win our children over to one brand of Christianity.

Indeed this is the antithesis of what we do. If we do our job well, we arm our young people with knowledge and teach them how to think and explore critically. If we do

ⁱ Augustine's Confessions VIII, XXI

ⁱⁱ Lord Castlereagh's advice to Governor Bligh, HRA, Series 1, Vol.VI. Additional Instructions to Governor Bligh, 20.11.1805, cited in Cleverley, 1971; pp.18-19.)

ⁱⁱⁱ Report of the Select Committee of the Legislative council, 21