

ASKING QUESTIONS:
A VITAL APPROACH FOR FAITH
FORMATION IN A SINGAPORE CHINESE
COMMUNITY OF FAITH

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**Asking Questions:
A Vital Approach for Faith Formation
in a Singapore Chinese Community of Faith**

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work that has not previously been submitted for a qualification at any tertiary education institution.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Christy', with a horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the name.

.....
(Name and signature)

ABSTRACT

The Singapore Chinese Christian community of faith (CFC), with its roots in Confucian Heritage cultures (CHC), tends to be passive and apathetic learners. They prefer learning approaches that are teacher-centric, book-orientated, and rote, with an emphasis on knowledge acquiring. If the purpose of the CFC is understood in terms of ministry to God, to believers and to the world (Mt 28:19), then CE has an obligation to nurture believers to become better thinkers and practitioners of their faith (Col 1:28). The goal of the CE is not merely to bring people to initial saving faith, for by doing so, results in members remaining stagnant in their faith. A key challenge, therefore, facing CE in the Singapore CFC is to remain relevant, dynamic, and vibrant. One of the ways to meet these goals is to introduce active learning approaches like, thinking, reflecting and asking questions in the learning environment.

The purpose of the study is to explore to what extent is asking questions a vital learning approach for faith formation in the Singapore Chinese CFC, and how may this approach be developed in the learning context.

The study surveyed 66 Singaporean adult learners across similar Bible Study Programmes (BSP). Its purpose was to measure the level of active learning, which included asking questions, between the two classrooms observed. The findings pointed to asking questions as a two-way process between teacher and learner. It also concluded that asking questions fostered good thinking dispositions through the process of enculturation.

Shari Tishman's model in, *The Thinking Classroom: Learning and Teaching in a Culture of Thinking*, was the criterion for asking questions in the classroom. The age, education level, working role, English language proficiency, learning orientation, class management, motivation, the teacher and response to questions were statistically significant between the two classes studied. Results showed that the strategic spirit and high order knowledge were significant among graduate learners in the CFC. The level of affective thinking dispositions in post-graduate learners was the most significant predictor for satisfaction of asking questions in the BSP classes.

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NOTES AND ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used in order of appearance:

CE	Christian Education
CFC	Christian faith community
CHC	Confucian Heritage Cultures
NIV	New International Version of the Bible
COOS	Church of Our Saviour
BSP	Biblical Studies Programme

The following abbreviations are used for the books of the Bible. The Bible version used in this thesis is the *New International Version Bible* (1989), Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

<i>Abbreviation</i>	<i>Book</i>	<i>Abbreviation</i>	<i>Book</i>
Ex	Exodus	Am	Amos
Deut	Deuteronomy	Mic	Micah
Josh	Joshua	Hag	Haggai
Judg	Judges	Zech	Zechariah
1 Sam	1 Samuel	Mal	Malachi
2 Sam	2 Samuel	Mt	Matthew
2 Kings	2 Kings	Mk	Mark
2 Chr	2 Chronicles	Lk	Luke
Ezra	Ezra	Jn	John
Job	Job	Acts	Acts
Ps	Psalms	Rom	Romans
Prov	Proverbs	1 Cor	1 Corinthians
Isa	Isaiah	Eph	Ephesians
Jer	Jeremiah	Col	Colossians
Hos	Hosea	1 Pet	1 Peter

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Context of the Problem

The concept of passive learning tends to describe most traditional Chinese classrooms, where the teacher merely lectures, and the learners listen in a passive manner. Passive learning is usually defined as an authoritarian, teacher-centric, and book-driven learning approaches that relies heavily on repetitive learning and memorisation (Biggs 1994; Marton, Watkins, & Tang 1997; Zhang 1993; Zhang & Lee 1991). Providing minimal interaction, most teacher-learner and peer engagement are seen as a distraction in the classroom. The Chinese dislike overt displays of expression, therefore, asking questions in class are viewed as drawing attention to themselves. This is a result of a sense of reserve which has long been associated with the Asian ethos (Liu & Littlewood 1997, 371).

Does passive learning create a passive view of the Christian faith? John Westerhoff believes it does, particularly, when Christian education pedagogies do not advance beyond the traditional teacher-driven and textbook schooling model, which he terms the “schooling-instructional paradigm” (1976, 23). Learning the Christian faith in such settings, create a missed opportunity for an authentic learning experience of knowing what it means to be a Christian. Allan Harkness states that the schooling model for faith formation is counter-productive, and if left unchecked, the community of faith (CFC) may be in the danger of developing Christians who may know all the right information about God, but lack the capacity to experience what it means to be a Christian. “In other words, learning will be just limited to an acquisition of knowledge that merely accommodates knowing how to act and behave Christianly” states Harkness (1996, 14). William Anderson sees the need to evaluate “schooling” as one form of educational intervention, provided that it is re-developed in light of Christian emphases and limits, that are compatible with biblical principles (1998, 37).

Christians have to grapple with complex issues that challenge their faith, beliefs and values, in a pluralistic world today. How can they effectively respond biblically and theologically, as critical thinkers, as well as, ethical and emphatic practitioners of their faith? Evaluating passive learning methods and replacing them with active learning methods, that go beyond mere knowledge acquiring, suggests a step in the right direction for authentic faith formation. One method in the active learning spectrum is the practice of asking questions.

Purpose and Significance

There is a wide plethora of work done on Western models of the Christian learning environment both biblically, theologically and practically, yet, little has been done specifically on Asians learners in the faith community employing asking questions as a means to deeper faith formation. (Anderson 1979, 15; Astley & Day 1992, 13; Collinson 2000, 7; Dykstra 1985, 106; Harkness 1996, 1; Seymour & Miller 1990, 7; Stott 1991, 2) This study aims to study adult Singapore learners in faith communities with the view of finding relevant and affective ways to develop a deeper understanding of their faith. The primary area this writer will explore is asking questions to enhance the current learning environment in the local faith community, through active learning and participation, beyond just knowledge acquisition and cognitive learning (Bloom 1956). Affective learning outcomes involve attitudes, motivation, and values, which are vital to faith formation. Their expression involves statements of opinions, beliefs, or an assessment of worth (Smith & Ragan 1999, 94-95) which are vital components in experiencing an authentic Christian experience.

The Research Question

The end goal of Christian Education (CE) is to prepare God's people for service in his Kingdom. Faith formation requires a deliberate and strategic approach to move learners to a deeper understanding of God, self and others. Thus, the aim of this study is to address the following research question:

To what extent is asking questions a vital learning approach for faith formation in a Singapore Chinese learning community, and how may this approach be developed in this learning context?

The Research Method

The present study is both conceptual and practical in approach with the aim of testing the validity of incorporating asking questions into the learning environment of adult Singapore Chinese learners in the Christian faith community (CFC). The normative dimension draws from both biblical and contemporary educational theory, and blends empirical and philosophical considerations. The task is concerned with the existing learning environment of adult learners in a Singapore Chinese CFC.

In regards to this study, the works cited are a blend of theoretical constructs from Western CE authors, like William Anderson, Jeff Astley and John Westerhoff and Eastern secular writers like, Su-Yueh Wu , Zhenhui Rao and Zhu Chang who have formulated a mode of conceptual enquiry valuable to this study. The author's module teachers are also consulted, namely, Allan Harkness, Brian Hill, Lee Wanak and Moira Lee, to seek a pragmatic and contextualised of CE in the Singapore environment. These writers have strong convictions, backed with biblical, theological and theoretical experience, so their approaches can be considered sound. The challenge has been to ensure that adequate weighting has been given to the insights of these different writers, especially, when more published materials based on Western models of CE are readily available.

In terms of finding a suitable learning environment for the BSP, the models in the Old and New Testaments, the Jewish *midrash* and Shari Tishman, David Perkins, and Eileen Jay's *The Thinking Classroom: Learning and Teaching in a Culture of Thinking* (1995) are consulted.

The approach adopted for this study is representative of orthodox Protestant Christianity, as summarised in the following statement of belief, adapted from Allan Harkness (1996, 6):

We believe that the Church is the Body of Christ, whose members believe in Jesus Christ and acknowledge his headship. They are joined together by the Holy Spirit who provides his gifts to everyone to contribute to the growth and ministry of the Body of Christ. Therefore all believers have a place and part to play and they do this by committing themselves to a local church for accountability, growth and ministry,

and concerning the Bible:

We believe that the Bible is God's written word. It contains all things necessary for salvation, teaches God's will for his world, and has supreme authority for faith, life and the continuous renewal and reform of the Church.

As a parameter, the meanings outlined in the Old and New Testament, are treated as normative for an understanding of the Church as the community of people called by God; with the risen Christ at its head; and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Similarly, the educational principles and strategies presented in this study are assumed to be normative despite the theological differences of the Christian educators who espouse them. The principles, by which the faith community, are known as God's "kingdom community" form the backdrop of these discussions.

While this study necessarily discusses theories and strategies adopted by people within faith communities, it recognises the transformative work of God's Holy Spirit in the salvation and sanctification of Christian believers. In other words, the existence of the Church is a gift of grace from God. Thus, it is the recommendation of this research that any suggested strategy for Christian education should be balanced by an appreciation that it can only be of lasting value as God chooses to use it. It is in the humility that results from recognising one's place before God, that this study proceeds.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to exploring asking questions as a model for Christian Education (CE) among adult Singapore Chinese learners. However, it is the task of others to undertake a more thorough empirical testing to validate the proposed model. The literature examined is limited to the English language. Most of the literature cited are from proponents in North America, Australia, and

the United Kingdom and refer to CE in Protestant church life as the implied context. Different forms of educational expression are not addressed specifically. For this study, the ecclesiastical focus is predominantly of the Protestant stream of Christianity, set in a bilingual, English/ Chinese-speaking church of multiracial, multi-cultural adult Singapore Chinese learners. The four limitations of this research in terms of the research context are as follows:

1. It is limited to studying only one learning activity – asking questions – and the role it plays in cultivating a thinking culture in the classroom. The findings report on the responses from a sampling of 66 out of 165 adult learners, who are mostly of ethnic Singapore Chinese origin.
2. The findings do not reflect the responses from the other minority races and cultures that make up Singapore’s ethnically diverse society.
3. The practice of asking questions may coincide with the experience of adult Singapore learners from other faith communities in Singapore. The findings may not necessarily reflect or represent any of those churches and Christian denominations in Singapore due to the different composition and socio-economic make-up of Christian adults in those churches.
4. This survey does not reflect other CE endeavors in the church. The object of the study is a single Singapore CFC, Church of Our Saviour (COOS). Although of orthodox Anglican heritage, Church of our Saviour is unique for its Charismatic/Pentecostal stance while maintaining some Anglican distinctives in its liturgy and practice.¹

The research approach, methods employed, and instruments designed, accommodate these limitations. They include preliminary observations of the

¹ Church of Our Saviour is a parish within the Anglican Diocese of Singapore.

group, implementation of the research instruments and post-observations for verification of data over a period of eight weeks.

Definition of Terms

The key terms used in this study are briefly listed below, but detailed definitions will be discussed as the study unfolds. The following working definitions are offered for now:

Christian Education (CE): Christian education (CE) refers to the educational endeavors of Christian faith communities, enabling people to understand, appropriate, and apply the Christian faith (Harkness 1996, 1-19). This study adopts the definition of CE from the *Biblical Theory of Christian Education* by Francis Nigel Lee who defines CE as “the science of inculcating general virtues into learners in accordance with the commands of the Word of God. The methods of CE vary from family worship, saying grace at the table, to Bible reading, Sunday School, church attendance and to methods employed in Christian theological schools and colleges. Yet, all methods are but the means to the sole end of glorifying God” (1967, 21).

CE sets its foundation on the understanding that God is sovereign in all things. CE nurtures an active outworking of the Gospel principles and emphasises spiritual and moral values, as well, as the academic and physical development of learners, by providing stimulating and varied learning experiences. It recognises the individual worth of each person and their responsibility to others in the community.

CE is a “living” thread that weaves its way through all teaching and learning and it highlights the relevance of education to life. This paper also agrees with viewing CE as the learning function of the church, that is tied to its mission and vision. It goes beyond defining CE as just Sunday school, where one completes a course or programme of study. It is the position of this paper to see CE as spiritual growth that takes place in a Christian believer throughout his or her whole life (Col 1: 9-11).

Christian faith community (CFC): This is comparable to, but not synonymous with, a “local congregation” or “local church”. In this study “Christian faith community” encapsulates the dynamics of a Christ-centered community that lies at the heart of the biblical concept of “church”. Local congregations are faith communities, but a faith community may be expressed in a structure other than what is commonly conceived as a “local congregation” (Harkness 1996, 12).

Confucian Heritage Culture: The term Asian or Asians are used conveniently and interchangeably to define people who belong to Confucian Heritage Culture. While ethnocentric assumptions about learners from China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Korea and Japan exist, their differences appear slight when examining the influences of cultural factors on approaches to learning. This paper refrains from assuming all Chinese learners from these milieu of nations are homogeneous in every way (Watkins & Biggs 1996). Nonetheless, there are also similarities that proved useful in this study of Singapore Chinese learners, as they form the majority of learners in the local CFC under study.

Singapore Chinese: This term describes specifically Singaporeans of Chinese ethnic origin, whose ancestors had migrated to Singapore from mainland China during the 1800s. There exists some degree of differences between the Singapore Chinese and mainland Chinese, in terms of mindset, culture and language. While mainland Chinese is largely Sino-centric in their outlook of the world, Singapore Chinese are educated in English medium schools (but taught the Chinese language throughout their education) and are exposed to western influences. Singapore Chinese culture is a blend of Singapore culture, which is made up of influences from other ethnicities, and Western culture.²

² According to government statistics, the population of Singapore as of 2009 was 4.99 million. Various Chinese linguistic groups formed 74.2% of Singapore's residents, Malays 13.4%, Indians 9.2%, while Eurasians, Arabs and other groups formed 3.2%. Singapore Statistic. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Singapore> (accessed March 20, 2010).

Singapore is a plural society comprising multi-lingual, multi-ethnic and multi-religious people. Each group has retained its own special individuality and uniqueness and diverse forms of social etiquette. The country is a showcase of racial and religious harmony, with Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus and Christians living and working side-by-side while respecting their many differences. <http://www.entersingapore.info/sginfo/country-facts.php> (accessed March 20, 2010).

Faith formation: Faith formation suggests the impact of learning through CE on a person so that his or her perspective, behaviour, values and personhood are changed and moulded into a new contour and intention. This is a change that eventually becomes internalised and integrated in the person (Gorman 1990, 65). In faith formation, these characteristics are defined in a holistic perspective (Fowler 1971, 9ff).

Critical thinking: Critical thinking is defined as a purposeful and reflective judgment about what to believe or what to do in response to observations, experiences, verbal or written expressions and arguments. Critical thinking may involve determining the meaning and significance of what is observed or expressed (Fisher & Scriven 1997, 21). While thinking can often be casual or routine, critical thinking deliberately evaluates the quality of thinking. Edward Glaser (1941, 5) writes that the ability to think critically involves three things: a thinking disposition towards the range of one's experiences; the knowledge of the methods of logical inquiry and reasoning; the skill in applying these two methods.

Learning environment: This describes a situation where learners are introduced to deliberate and explicit ways to learn. The role of each learner is to identify the features of a task to generate a rich discussion. The role of the teacher is to foster productive interactions between learners with biblical truth (2 Tim 3: 16-17), in order to pass on this knowledge, as they teach others. The learning environment that fosters a positive educational climate empowers learners.

Classroom: The concept of “classroom” conveniently describes a place where the learning community meets together in a room setting. A classroom is a room where teaching or learning activities take place. The classroom provides a safe space where learning can take place, uninterrupted by distractions. The classroom is clearly the dominant setting for learning. The flexibility of classroom instruction, makes it possible for learning to take place at any time, at any place, and (perhaps most importantly) at any pace that the learner desires.

Questions: There are two types of questions used in this study. One, knowledge questions allow learners to form logical conclusions of their own. By following up answers with further questions and selecting questions which further advance the discussion, the questioner forces the learner to think in a disciplined and responsible manner, while continually aiding the learners by posing facilitating questions (McKenzie 2007). Two, philosophical questions are conceptual questions that deal with questions that reflect on life issues. For example, “is euthanasia justifiable?” Philosophical questions develop a “world view” as a person reflects about the world and his/her place in it. It does not give definitive answers, but rather, the purpose of these questions for logical implications of various assumptions, as well as, the inter-relationships between them.

Active Learning: This approach links the world of learning with the world of action, through a reflective process within a small cooperative learning group. The group meets regularly to work on individual members' real-life issues with the aim of learning with and from each other. The father of active learning, Reginald Revans (1982), has said that there can be no learning without action and no (sober and deliberate) action without learning.

Adult Learning (Andragogy): Malcolm Knowles (1984) states that adult learners bring a great deal of experience to the learning environment, which educators can use as a resource. Adults expect to have a high degree of influence on what they are to be educated for and how they are to be educated. The active participation of learners is vital in designing and implementing educational programs. Adults need to be able to see applications for new learning, through a reflective process within small cooperative learning groups (McGill & Beaty 1995). The 'father' of action learning, Reginald Revans, along with many others who use, research and teach this approach, argue that action learning is ideal for finding solutions to problems that do not have a 'right' answer because the necessary questioning insight can be facilitated by people, learning with and from one another in community (Revans 1982).

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Questions in the Old and New Testaments

The early Hebrews primarily adopted three forms of catechizing: domestic, conducted by the head of the family for the benefit of his children and servants; scholastic, taught by teachers in schools; and ecclesiastical, imparted by priests and Levites in the Temple and the synagogues. Proselytes were carefully instructed before being admitted as members of the Jewish faith. This regular instruction began as soon as children reached twelve years of age (see Ex 13:8-10,14-16; Deut 4:9,10; 6:21-22). Parents were encouraged to teach their children the truths of God in everyday situations.

At each Passover *seder*, part of the ritual included the *Maggid* (teacher), who retold the story of the deliverance of the Jews from Egypt, including the recital of “the four questions” by the Jewish children along the lines of Deuteronomy 6: 21-22. Here is an example:

In the future, when your son asks you, “What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws the LORD our God has commanded you?”, tell him, “We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand”. (Deut 6:21-22)

The *Maggid's* reply to the questions at each Passover reinforced the teaching. The institution of the Torah, meaning “instruction”, was the most “significant act of verbal revelation” (Rich 2008). Early Jewish learning communities were located within the family, making education intergenerational in nature and design (Ex 12:26-17; 20:4-1; Deut 4:9-10; 6:6-7; 11:19-20; 29:9; Ps 78:3-6, Prov 6:20). The prophets were the most vocal in the Old Testament (Ex 18:20; 24:12; Deut 4:14; 6:1; 31:19; Isa 8:3-16; 42:21-24; Jer 8:8; 9: 13; 16:11; Hos 1:3-9; Mic 6:8; Zech 7:12;). They referred primarily to the Mosaic Law in their instruction (Isa 8:16; 42:21, 24; Jer 9:13, 16:11, Zech 7:12). Jewish educators used asking questions as the core of all their learning to stimulate

learners to comprehend and evaluate information. They primarily encouraged their learners and disciples to study the Torah, through the “method of probing”, to find its hidden beauty in the text. Probing questions helped learners gain a deeper and more profound understanding of the divine wisdom.

Priests were the instructors of the community (Deut 22; Ps 27:31; 40:8; Hag 2:11; Mal 2:6-9; 3:11). They used the Torah in their instruction (Ps 37:31; 40:8; Hag 2:11; Mal 2:6-9). In Deuteronomy 31:9-14, the priests read the Torah as instructions to the Hebrew nation and the foreigners living among the Jews in Israel. Sages or wise men made up other kinds of teachers in the OT (Judg 14:12-14; 2 Sam 13:1-22; Prov 3:3-11; 10:8; 12:15; 13:14; 14:2; 28:4-9) who were knowledgeable in the Torah and in the practical application of its teachings.

Scribes only emerged at the end of the OT era and were described not only scribes, but rabbis and physicians in the New Testament (NT). Ezra was an example of a teacher-scribe (Ezra 7:10-11).

The faith community was also the nation’s instructor. Israel was a theocratic nation with its culture and religious practices distinctly reflecting that. Israel’s faith orientation was deeply expressed through their festivals, worship and public assemblies, which were occasions for education (Deut 4:14; 6:1; 26:1ff; 31:39; Josh 8:30-35; 2 Kings 2:3; 4:38; 5:22; 2 Chr 17:7-9). Educational imperatives and implications saw both the person and the community as a common theme in Scripture.

However, Eleanor Daniel and John Wade in *Foundations for Christian Education* (1999, 321) warn that some of these models are by nature cultural and cannot be replicated or transplanted into today’s context. Wade argues that while biblical principles remains essential, the methods of applying those principles are best assessed for their relevance and effectiveness in the time in which they existed. Yet, as in all educational endeavors, the teacher plays a pivotal role and is the primary component of the educational system.

In the Old Testament, teachers played a primary role in the faith development of the community. God was Israel’s first teacher (Ex 35:34; Job 36:22; Isa 3:8). His revelatory acts in both word and deed, demonstrated his place

as the teacher of the faith community. God was central to the life of the nation (Ex 20:1-7; Judg 2:10-15).

Herewith, lies an interesting paradigm. Those who were called as teachers were not the real educators; they were transmitters, and more importantly, facilitators of God's message. The true educator was God, who spoke through the Scriptures. It was challenging to hear his voice and often it was challenging for those teachers to let his voice be heard.

As with Old Testament faith communities, the New Testament community of faith, (later to become the Church), introduced and reinforced the formation of faith through exposure and involvement in the community (Acts 2:42-47). At that time, the function of the teacher was regarded as a gift from God to the Church (Rom 12:3-8; 1 Cor 12:27-31; Eph 4:7-13; 29-32; 5:15-20; 1 Pet 4:10-11). The gift of teaching was acknowledged as the special ability that God gave (and still gives) to certain members of the Church, to communicate relevant truths in such a way that its members would learn.

Salient points to note in early church educational approaches are:

1. In early church history, asking questions were used in three dominant learning environment: domestic, scholastic, and ecclesiastical
2. The prophets and priests were originally the teachers of the people
3. The nation of Israel and later the church were considered the educational medium for knowing about God and his Kingdom

The Questions of Jesus

Jesus taught his disciples through non-formal approaches and social interactions with a discipleship model. The term "disciple" appears 142 times in the Gospels, indicating the disciple model was a significant approach. This included a personal invitation by Jesus to be part of his small and unique praxis-orientated community who would follow him throughout his mission.

Lee Wanak on the questions of Jesus, as Christian pedagogy, throws a different light on the subject and it is worthy of examination. According to him,

the purpose of Jesus' questions was not merely for the sake of acquiring knowledge, rather, Jesus used questions purposefully and strategically to,

crack conventional thinking and move people toward kingdom ways of thinking; from thinking dominated by culture to a worldview centered in God... a way of countering the normative patterns of thinking and behaving of the day (2009, 167).

This interpretation is also supported by Stephen Spear, who defines the way Jesus confronted his listeners, as transformational teaching style designed to move them from “conventional to a post-conventional, world-centric embrace of humanity” (2005, 354).

The parable of the Good Samaritan serves as an example of Jesus' transformational intentions and methodology taught through the story. In essence, the teaching explained the Kingdom of God as an inward change and the first step towards such a change was to think away from the norms of convention to a Kingdom worldview.

In terms of teaching approaches derived from a close study of the Gospels, Jesus appeared to have no qualms about adopting the teaching styles of his contemporaries. He used the metaphor “yoke” in Matthew 2:28-29 to popularly describe the relation of a teacher to his pupil in rabbinic Judaism. “Come follow me” (Mk 1:17) was a common invitational call frequently employed by both Greek philosophers and Hebrew teachers to their pupils.

Also a notable feature of Jesus' “educational approach” was his continuity with the traditions of Old Testament Judaism teaching. There was nothing to indicate that he put aside the basic and enduring Hebraic educational values in favor of some of the contrasting Greco-Roman values, prevalent in his era. The Gospel narratives presented Jesus as a teacher who invited participation from his learners and frequently used intentional learning approaches, such as, asking questions. This approach served to make his learners think more critically about a matter before he supplied them with an answer.

During his public life, Jesus frequently employed the rabbinical method to impart instruction and to challenge his learners to think. For example, he asked, “what think you of Christ?” (Mt 16:13), “who do men say that the son of man is?”

(Mk 8:27) and “whom do you say that I am?” to draw out from his learners their own opinions about him.

The four Gospels recorded around two hundred questions asked by Jesus. The questionings of Jesus were strategic and focused on what he wanted his learners to learn. A brief survey of the questions Jesus asked showed that they covered a variety of themes, which he thought were vital. Lorna Anderson (2005) notes that Jesus’ questions included these specific questions:

1. The identity of God (26 questions)
2. Matters of truth, Law and the Word (62 questions)
3. Man and his human identity and character (33 questions)
4. Man’s spiritual character and redeemed character (24 questions)
5. Christian ministry (14 questions)
6. Human suffering (20 questions)

It is noteworthy that Jesus directly answered only three of his 183 questions recorded in the Bible. This provides some assurance to religious educators that they need not always provide the answers to life’s perplexing questions. For example, in the episode of feeding of the five thousand (Jn 6:5-6), Jesus posed a “problem”, but received an immediate reaction from his unthinking disciples that such a task was impossible (v.7). However, Andrew showed his problem-solving skills by finding a boy’s lunch and presented it to Jesus (v.8-9).

In this way, learning took place in Andrew when he responded to a question that challenged him to think of ways to solve the problem. When he was challenged this way, he could start to think of creative options and sought solutions by himself. In addition, Jesus did not just settle on just one question, but employed many ways to ask the same question in a variety of ways to generate critical thinking. Thus, Jesus was being both strategic and focused on what he wanted his learners to learn through his questions using various communication

modes to bring about a specific reaction from his audience. Walter Wink suggests that, “Jesus set about re-socialising his disciples into learning diametrically. He taught them new values, new assumptions, new strategies for social and personal transformation” (1992, 135). Jesus tended to use probing questions pegged to the direct experience of his learners, inviting them to distance themselves from the rules and roles of conventional wisdom. Jesus used questions to enable learning in the affective domain. By asking questions, Jesus taught the people that the Kingdom of God was not only a new imperative, but also called for a new way to think and behave. Some of his hearers caught a glimpse of what this new way was when they expressed amazement of his teachings and described him as one who taught with authority, not like their usual religious leaders (Mt 7:29). In other instances, Jesus challenged the people with a question, “why do you not judge for yourselves what is right?” (Lk 12:57).

The questions of Jesus had transformational intentions. For example, in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:30-37) when he was asked, “who is my neighbour?”. Jesus did not answer the question directly. He redirected the attention to rest on his learners by asking, “Who proved to be neighbour to the man?” The developmental implications of such questions surface a myriad of responses, ranging from conviction, to being convulsed when confronted with them” (Wink 1992, 123).

Jesus consciously and purposefully taught in this manner to teach the worldview of the Kingdom of God. For example, if he wanted to teach the concept of neighborliness, his main character was usually a Samaritan and not a Jew, thus demonstrating that a neighbor in Kingdom definition was one who was as much an enemy as the Samaritan was a neighbor (Blomberg 1990, 31). Jesus used questions and counter questions in a variety of situations and settings throughout the gospels, not to teach them *what to think*, but *how to think*.

A close study of Jesus’ questions reveals that he frequently employed the following questioning approaches:

1. He used illustrations to frame his questions. (Lk 10:30ff)
2. He answered a question with another question (Matt 22:19)

3. He kept silent, sighed or wept as a response (Jn 19:9; Mk 8:12)
4. He framed a question with reference point or illustration (Matt 5:46)

Learning to think in *How We Think: A Restatement of the Relation of Reflective Thinking to the Educative Process* by John Dewey (1933), offers a more informal approach to the formal framework of learning in schools. Formal learning means structured, curriculum-centred and teacher-directed schooling approaches. Dewey sees thinking and learning as experience, interaction and reflection. Applied to CE, these linear models of thinking adopted in most traditional learning processes, like rote and memorisation, limit learners to focus only on factual knowledge, with little or no opportunity to question their own pre-understandings about themselves, their world, and their roles in relation to the kingdom of God. Learners are not to just acquire knowledge, but rather, that they change the way they think; that they transform from “a life in the world of conventional wisdom to a life centered in God” (Spear 2005, 357). Learning intentions should aim to create a changed mindset that start deep inside people.

Jack Mezirow calls this process a “perspective transformation”, a term that stems from his *Transformative Learning Theory*. Mezirow suggests that the process of perspective transformation results in one being capable of change, rather than, acting upon the “purposes, values, feelings, and meanings... we have uncritically assimilate from others” (1997, 8). Transformative learning, states Mezirow, often involves deep, powerful emotions or beliefs evidenced by action. This approach is categorised by three phases: critical reflection, reflective discourse and action. These three phases were also evident in Jesus’ questioning approach to challenge the conventions of his time, for example:

1. He explained at the level of his learners’ understanding
2. He challenged the status quo to think from a Christian worldview
3. He replaced current values to Kingdom values
4. He activated active faith and inspired commitment
5. He provoked deep-level thinking to change mindsets forever

Jesus, being a Jew, adopted many teaching approaches of Jewish learning in his learning episodes including, asking questions. A form of Jewish learning approach is examined in the next section.

Questions Used in the Jewish Learning Context

Rabbis in the early Jewish schools almost exclusively used questions in the study of the Torah. It was one of the teaching and learning methods they employed as an early education strategy of children of a young age. It was likely that Jesus received his early Torah instruction through the *midrash* approach in the Nazareth synagogue (Blackburn 1966, 46). It is a good model to study to seek its relevance for Singapore Chinese learners.

Midrash had its origins in the return of the Jews from exile in Babylon. As a cultic practice, the *midrash* was a common way to study and apply the Torah in order to maintain a standard of Jewish life in the post-exilic age of Israel's history according to Rabbi Scott Green's *Approaches to Ancient Judaism: Theory and Practice* (1975). As a definition, *midrash* (Hebrew: מדרש) meant "to investigate" or "study" in a homiletical method of exegesis of Biblical texts.

The term *midrash* is referred to a compilation of homiletic commentaries on the Tanakh (Hebrew Bible), in the form of the legal and ritual (*Halakhah*) and the legendary, moralising, folkloristic, and anecdotal (*Aggadah*) parts. The *midrash* was an intentional study undertaken by the Rabbi to teach his learners how to investigate legal and ritual issues, as well, as legends, morals, folklore and anecdotal content in the homiletic commentaries of the Hebrew Bible.

The *midrash* exclusively employed asking questions, as a way to stimulate thinking in early Jewish learning environment. As for the study itself, the classical *midrash* started off with a seemingly unrelated sentence from the Torah like the Psalms, Proverbs or the Prophets. In turn, a rabbinical interpretation of the sentence was offered after. Many different exegetical methods were employed next to derive deeper meanings from a text. The presence of apparently

⁵ In a study of Singapore Chinese managers in three age cohorts of "less than 41 years", "41–51 years", and "older than 51 years", younger managers were reported to be higher in individualism values, lower in collectivism values, and lower in the values of Confucianism, with the differences significant: a $p < 0.05$ or better (Littrell, 16).

superfluous words or letters, chronology of events, parallel narratives or other textual anomalies were often a springboard for interpretation of segments of text. In many cases, a dialogue was then expanded manifold; handful of lines in the Scriptural narrative also became the start of long philosophical discussions. The line was thin between extrapolating new meanings from ancient scriptures (borrowing the authority of the old) and actually composing new scripture (or quasi-scripture) by extrapolating from the old (*haggadah*), but this was the essence of the *midrash*.

In the Hebrew Bible, the word “*mhrs*” was mentioned two times, first, in 2 Chronicles 13:22 and, the second, in 2 Chronicles 24:27. The Hebrew text, “*hrs*” occurred more frequently. In all cases, secular or religious, it evoked the idea of directed search, such as, determining the identity of a person (2 Sam 11:13); searching for what was lost (Deut 22:2); or examining the guilt of a man (Job 10:6). Most often the term was used in a religious sense meaning to frequent a cultic place, to seek God, to seek the responses of God in worship and in personal prayer (Deut 12:5; 2 Chr 1:5; Ps 34:5; 69:33; 105:4; Am 5:5). *Midrash* was especially used with the Scriptures to seek God. Many of these cultic practices were common in the post-exilic age of Israel’s history. “*hrs*” focuses more on the study of the Torah and its application to a standard of life. These characteristics include the following:

1. The point of departure is scripture: This is the fundamental difference in the genre particular to Israel. It cannot occur outside Israel because it presupposes faith in revelation recorded in the Holy Books. Reflection is the primary learning method in the form of meditation of the sacred texts or “searching” of Scripture.
2. It is a study based on homiletical principles: This is the “natural corollary” of a *midrash*. Sacred text is read in the synagogue followed by a homily related to it. It is studied diligently that it may be understood and its obscurities made clear. Those who “search” the Scriptures are not “ivory tower” scholars, as *midrash* is not considered a genre of academic

study, rather, it is a study of the liturgies regarding the Torah, the Sabbaths and the Feasts.

3. It is attentive to the text: The concern of the rabbis means that they often begin their enquiry by asking the question, “why?” – “*mpny mh*” an expression frequently used in interpretation. The rabbis will seek precise meanings of rare and difficult terms like “*yn...l*” and make connections and associations for better understanding. For instance, they will answer “this is nothing other than...”; “this is the same as...” In this way, the rabbis will clarify sacred text and probe its depths by the method of “recourse” or “parallel passages”. Because they know the scripture by heart, indoctrinated in them as children, Rabbis are constantly seen explaining Scripture through the Scripture – “*twrh mtwk twrh*” – which clearly is an excellent principle. The recourse takes various forms, for example, the author may refer to isolated passages taken from different parts along a theme. Ordinarily only a few sources are used which points to the tendency of *midrash* to be selective, with instances, where just a single text is studied in great depth.

4. It is based on two types of questions: Asking questions provides a good stimulus for thinking and it is a learning method employed in most rabbinical instruction. Two types of questions are used in the *midrash* approach. The first type is used as a form of primary investigation, between the observation and hypothesis stages to gather knowledge and facts. The skill of investigating is central to asking questions. An example, that is applied today, is the Socratic method that uses the learners’ responses and their questions. These are then, harnessed by a teacher, in such a way to discover the truth, without direct instruction or intervention. This allows learners to then form logical conclusions of their own. By following up all answers with further questions, and by selecting questions which advance the discussion, the Socratic questioner forces the class to think in a disciplined, intellectually responsible manner, while

continually aiding the learners by posing facilitating questions. An example of this kind of Socratic questioning is the incident when the Jewish leaders asked Jesus, “Should we pay taxes?” Jesus answered them with another question to advance their thinking by asking them, “Who’s portrait is on it? And who’s inscription?” (Mt 22:20, Mk. 12:13-17).

The second type is used to aid reflective learning. These primarily deal with questions that people can reflect on with regard to their lives and their world. These are not factual questions, for example, “is euthanasia justifiable?”, instead, philosophical questions develop a “world view” as a person reflects about the world and his or her place in it. It never gives definitive or final answers to the questions that are of the greatest importance. Engaging in philosophical questions allow for an examination of rational intellectual choices and assumptions, and it allows one to see the logical implications of various assumptions, as well as, the interrelationships between and among those choices.

The *midrash* employs questions to stimulate thinking in the study of Scripture references (Green 1975, 31-32) and is discussed below:

1. It is adapted to the present: The *midrash* exegesis concentrates primarily on an attentive study of the text. Its aim is purely theoretical, yet, with a practical goal defined in lessons for faith and for the religious way of life contained in the biblical text. The practical aspects of the biblical midrash is to find ways to apply and transfer that knowledge to a present day application. This practical concern leads midrash to re-interpret Scripture to “actualize it”. This characteristic branches into two strains – a close relation and constant reference to Scripture – the hallmark of midrash.
2. It holds the place of honour: Liturgical reading of the Scriptures holds the place of honour in the synagogue. These readings provide the material for the ‘sermon’ and a commentary (*aggadah*) follows based

on the reading. In the schools adjoining the synagogue, the same text will be used for instruction where it is studied for life application. The Law (Torah) is the subject matter for daily instruction and for keeping the tradition of the customs. The *aggadah* is depicted by the term “walk, step, way” from the meaning of “law-precept” standard of human behaviour. The *halakah* defines the meaning of the stories and events in history as depicted in the biblical texts. Here biblical narratives are the springboard to study the meanings of the words. Here good rabbis will commune with the learners and communicate with them, through a minimum of words, but with a maximum of meaning, which brings to mind why Jesus is acclaimed as a “Good Teacher”. Both the *aggadah* and *halakah* are an intentional activity of study, transmitted orally by rabbis through the generations.

In the first century church, the *midrash* model was adopted closely. It brought sense of continuity to the community of faith, as the first Christians expressed in symbolic forms, what was communicated, in terms of their attitudes towards life and expressed their beliefs (Green 1975, 31); Regalado 2001, 173). Hebrew thinking at that time carried with it a view of life that had a dynamic unity of real life, whether they were farmers, fishermen or teachers. All of these were seen as their God-given vocation and a means to glorify God. Paul used this concept by reminding his community in a Hebraic idiom, “so whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (1 Cor10:31). Study was also worship to the Hebrews. Abraham Heschel (1972), one of the leading Jewish theologians and Jewish philosophers of the 20th century, notes,

Genuine reverence for the sanctity of study is bound to invoke in the pupils, the awareness that study is not an ordeal, but an act of edification that the school is a sanctuary not a factory, that study is a form of worship (42).

Midrash had been traditionally regarded as something specifically Jewish and rabbinic, but later it was also found in the Hebrew Scriptures and present in New Testament writings. This was the challenge of the first century church as

they stood between the Hebraic and Greek learning approaches. The earliest Christians were Jews who were familiar with the *haggadic* expansion of scripture. The Gospel narratives and Acts were shown to be Christian *haggadah* upon Jewish scripture, creating new meanings from old. Some examples included the teachings on old and new wineskins (Mt 9:17), the new command (Jn.2:7), or assimilating the new attitude (Eph 4:23). Jesus and Paul, both being rabbis, applied *midrash* approaches by creating new interpretations of the old and often, new meanings altogether. In short, *midrash* was the method of hermeneutics (scriptural interpretation) used by the ancient rabbis in the time of Jesus and Paul.

A cursory scan of the New Testament finds the apostles did not use western Protestant methods of exegesis or interpretation, but rather, interpreted the Bible according to the *midrash* approach. It incorporated a grammatical-historical exegesis, vaguely similar to the western models of interpretation that the Reformers borrowed from 16th century Humanism, but it saw this as simply a first step (Green 1975, 33).

A contemporary form of *midrash* is defined as inductive/deductive Bible study with the application of its truths to life. Shared praxis like peer-to-peer learning in small groups, ministry and prayer are done in an *oikos* setting (Banks & Cherry 1989, 84). Here in a social network setting, the dimensions of holistic development, responsibility and shared praxis take place.

Salient points of *midrash* include the following:

1. The Scriptures form the basis to reflect and meditate life's truths
2. The Scriptures are studied by ordinary people and not just scholars
3. Questions are used frequently to motivate critical thinking
4. The principles of Scripture apply to life

The weakness of *midrash* model is the tendency, over time, to become ritualistic and routine in the investigation of Scripture. The Jewish people use the term *midrash* in a very strict and limited sense, which is quite different from the way Protestants use the term. As a model for learning, the *midrash* approach may only promote thinking on one level, that is, knowledge acquisition or facts alone. It may then miss the opportunity to discuss contemporary issues in the light of

Scripture, which make learning more applicable and meaningful, as learners live out their faith in the world.

Questions Used in the Chinese Learning Context

The Chinese notion of knowledge consists of learning and questioning (Hoisington, 2006). Noteworthy is the Chinese character for knowledge is composed of two ideographs. – “learning” (*xue*) and “questioning” (*wen*).

学问
学 = learning
问 = questioning

Asking questions are synonymous with learning and together, they point to the way to acquiring knowledge (*xue wen*). The Chinese understand the benefits of asking questions in the whole process of knowing, yet, they are given little opportunities to learn through asking questions because questions are never part of the learning approach in the Singapore classroom. It is assumed that current misconceptions about Singapore Chinese learners being unmotivated are, in fact, symptoms of the *nature* of the course requirements, rather than, a *function* of the learners themselves.

This suggests that acquiring the ability to question, as well as, cultivating the disposition to be a person who questions are best nurtured in a more systematic and intentional way. This points to meaningful enquiry that can flourish when both teacher and learners are equipped with questioning skills and dispositions to engage in dynamic communal discussions.

David Kolb argues the main weakness of current pedagogy is “the failure to recognise and explicitly provide for the differences in learning styles that are characteristic of both individuals and subject matters” (1984, 196). For example, learners who score the highest in active experimentation, tend to achieve high scores as a result of their learning through interactive small-group discussions, projects, peer feedback and homework, and not much is gained from just listening passively to lectures. Kolb’s practical suggestion is that teachers and learners

understand why the subject matter is taught the way it is and what changes they need to make their learning styles to study a subject better, rather than, accepting one approach to learn. This seems to suggest that teachers identify the range of learning styles required by the subject and modify their teaching accordingly. Both teachers and learners will then be “stimulated to examine and refine their learning theories”, says Kolb (202). For example, through dialogue, teachers can become more empathetic with their learners and so be more able to help them improve their knowledge and skills.

Peter Honey and Alan Mumford suggest that, “no single style has an overwhelming advantage over any other. Each style has its strengths and weaknesses and each may be especially important in one situation, but not in another” (2000, 43). According to them the learning style is “a description of the attitudes and behaviour that determine an individual’s preferred way of learning” (ibid). If this is the case, then two questions need addressing in light with Western and Chinese stereotyping of how each group learns:

1. Can learning styles or preferences change?
2. Are labels misleading when stereotyping?

To answer the first question, learning styles “are modifiable at will” and can strengthen an underdeveloped style by introducing “a change of circumstances” (19). For example, changing jobs by going to a firm with a different learning culture will change learning style preference, as one immerses into that company’s culture and work ethics. To answer the second question, putting on labels “are a convenient oversimplification ... [and] a starting point for discussion on how an individual learns. That discussion can then remove any misleading judgments” (21), as teachers avoid the dangers of labelling and stereotyping.

In order to persuade teachers and learners to develop sophisticated conceptions of both teaching and learning, Neil Entwistle believes that researchers recognise that “general theories of human learning are of limited value with only explaining everyday learning. It is essential for the theories to apply specifically to the context in which they are to be useful” (1990, 669).

What this means for the Singapore Chinese learning CFC is the need to respect where learners are at and the attempts made to introduce new routines, methods and tools to cultivate a learning culture conducive to enquiry, thinking and faith formation. In short, this means that the learning environment itself needs to be an agent of change and the teacher, as model and mentor, needs to be the main catalyst for that change. Learning outcomes in the affective domain, such as, motivation, interest, independence, and confidence, play a very important role in the learning CFC. When these disposition form in the learning environment, a more collaborative and collective community of learning develops, allowing adult learners to integrate and collaborate with each other in the most natural ways. Some salient points are:

1. Teachers, as authority figures, are highly esteemed
2. A collective ethic displayed through caring for each other
3. An obedience and compliance to rules and commands
4. Thinking-orientation and reflective learning cultivated
5. Rote and memorisation are aids to aspects of deep learning
6. Sensory stimulation accommodate holistic forms of learning
7. Asking questions foster thinking and learning

For Singapore Chinese learners, understanding their unique characteristics as learners, is the subject of this research and investigation, to produce evidence that these tendencies do exist and need to be considered carefully.

Asking Questions in Secular Pedagogies

Dewey made the case for an educational model which valued active inquiry as a means of placing experience over the reproduction of learned facts. Dewey argued that “anything that may be called knowledge, or a known object, marks a questions answered” (1933, 8). He believed that the act of questioning, thinking and reflecting was best done through social interactions. Since Dewey’s time, many educators still build on this concept of learner-centred models of education,

where various voices, experiences, and questionings are given a greater emphasis. Placing learners at the heart of their own learning, by exposing them to opportunities that allow them to gather evidence, make inferences, draw conclusions, and to take a course of action, as a result of active learning, appear to be a model that is adopted vigorously in most developed learning communities.

Knowles, in his theory of andragogy, or adult learning, emphasises that adults are usually self-directed learners who expect to take responsibility for their own decisions. It is important that adult learning programs accommodate this fundamental aspect of adults learning. According to Knowles, adult learners have four key characteristics that differ from child learners. They have:

1. A healthy self-concept where the learner moves from a dependent learning to a self-directed learning mode
2. Life experiences where the learner matures through a growing reservoir of experiences that, in turn, become an increasing resource for learning
3. A readiness to learn the developmental tasks of his or her social roles
4. An orientation to learn and apply immediately what he/she has learnt, shifting from subject-centeredness to problem centeredness.

Some argue that not all these concepts are limited, namely, they are based only on some characteristics of adult learners, rather than, life situation or changes in worldview or consciousness (Cross 1992, 248; Merriam & Caffarella 1991, 249; Mezirow 1991, 8). It needs to be seen if basing solely on human behaviour is not a reliable framework for establishing a theory.

Proponents of such active learning, (Bonwell & Eison 1991; Bruner 1961; Meyers & Jones 1993) see a greater degree of learning taking place when learners are fully engaged in active learning. Active learning is more than just listening passively to a lecture, but rather it is also doing something that includes discovering, questioning, processing, reflecting, and applying the information one

receives. Charles Bonwell and James Eison state that active learning strategies while comparable to lectures for achieving content mastery, they are superior to lectures for developing thinking and writing skills (1991, iii). Asking questions, as part of active learning develop critical, curious and reflective thinking. Jerome Bruner also suggests that “learners who actively engaged with the material were more likely to recall information” (1961, 21).

Since the mid-1970s, proponents of thinking approaches have proliferated under the banner of a ‘critical thinking’ movement that see new ways of visualising education and curriculum. Matthew Lipman agrees with Dewey’s assessment, that the process of education is likened to scientific inquiry. Taking this scientific metaphor further, he uses the term “community of inquiry” when speaking of the ideal classroom. The community of enquiry is an environment that fosters innate curiosity and willingness to explore and learn. Furthermore, questions are discussed around a problem allowing the opportunity for learners to be actively engaged and learning through the process of true inquiry. What emerges from these endeavours are the important concepts of judgment and relationships that form the basis of understanding that far exceeds simple fact-learning. For example, Lipman states, “it is not enough to learn the events of history, we must be able to see and think historically” (2003, 24).

Lipman is convinced that the process of engaging at a deeper level through the process of asking questions, preserve learning as something natural and engaging, even if done at a very young age. He introduces the concept of thinking and wondering in the school curriculum for children, where he capitalises on the natural sense of curiosity in young children and gradually directs them towards a more systematic enquiry. This mode of learning is also explicitly social.

Furthermore, Lipman states that the act of asking questions helps produce self-autonomy or individual thought and the ability to think for one’s self. He considers these as important aspects of effective and affective learning that traditional schooling models have usually overlooked. In his model, asking questions are facilitated with the understanding that there are never ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ questions. The teacher does not just supply the facts and answers, but rather, he/she simply introduces the stimulus material, be it a book, an object or a

Bible verse, and manages the flow of ideas. In such a community of enquiry, Lipman believes this approach can better create asking questions, that is, altogether creative, open and democratic (24).

The notion of questioning as democratic activity in learning is a concept developed by Norah Morgan and Juliana Saxton, that views every person has an equal opportunity to ask questions. What emerges is the view of a classroom as a “cradle of democracy” where the teacher becomes “one of the most influential nurturers of the democratic process” (2006, 9). Peer researchers, like Sally Godhino and Jeni Wilson, agree that asking questions are not only “pivotal to learning how to learn” but they are a means to solving problems, creating solutions and enacting change (2007, 6). The points to note in secular learning theories are as follows:

1. Learner-centred models of education aid faith formation
2. Active learning develops independent and self-motivated learning
3. Adults bring an increase in resource through their experiences
4. Adults apply their learning to their roles within the larger community
5. Adults become matured and well-rounded individuals

The democratic dimension where teachers and learners have equal opportunities to create the environment conducive to learning is ideal. Finding ways how to create a model, that not only deal with surface level solutions, but rather, address the deeper root issues, that are both sustainable and enduring, is found in the following model.

Tishman’s Thinking Classroom

A noteworthy contemporary model, that appears to deal with this democratic dimension, as well as, address the root issue, is *The Thinking Classroom: Learning and Teaching in a Culture of Thinking* by Shari Tishman, David Perkins, and Eileen Jay (1995). The trio have developed a comprehensive theoretical framework in their book, with an emphasis on creating thinking dispositions as the basis for an active learning environment where asking

questions can flourish. The enquiry models of Sally Godinho and Jeni Wilson (2007), Richard Audet (2005) and Neil Browne (2005) have been considered, but, they fall short in providing a solution to the deeper root problem to asking questions in the classroom, that this research seeks. The reason is that, they do not go beyond finding fallacies and offering new possibilities and solutions, but rather, they tend to focus more on the skills of asking questions, rather than, the function of asking questions to move learners into deeper engagement and thought. Tishman and her colleagues, on the other hand, offer a more concrete, systematic and holistic view of developing a “thinking culture” as the bedrock of asking questions, through their six components for thinking environment.

Tishman and her colleagues at Harvard Project Zero, suggest a set of criteria for assessing the effectiveness of an instructional approach, in teaching thinking dispositions, even if the focus of the approach is skills-centered. This view is based on the idea that thinking dispositions are learned through a process of enculturation, rather than, direct transmission. According to Tishman, thinking dispositions are “characterological” in nature, and, like many human character traits, they are developed in response to an immersion in a particular cultural milieu. The cultural milieu that best teaches thinking dispositions is a *culture of thinking* — an environment that reinforces good thinking in a variety of tacit and explicit ways. An effective program for teaching thinking dispositions, therefore, creates a culture of thinking in the classroom. Such a culture has the following four elements: (1) models of good thinking dispositions, (2) explanation of the strategies, concepts and rationales of good thinking dispositions, (3) peer interactions that involve thinking dispositions, and (4) formal and informal feedback around thinking dispositions (Tishman, Jay & Perkins 1993; Tishman, Perkins & Jay 1995).

Tishman coins the term, “a thinking classroom” and defines where several forces: language, values, expectations, and habits, work together to express and reinforce the enterprise of good thinking. She states, “in a classroom culture of thinking, the spirit of good thinking is everywhere. There is a sense that “everyone is doing it,” that everyone – including the teacher – is making the effort

to be thoughtful, inquiring, and imaginative, and these behaviours are strongly supported by the learning environment” (1995, 2).

The concept of a thinking culture in the classroom is adapted from several constructs by earlier proponents like, Robert H. Ennis and *The Rationality of Rationality: Why Think Critically?* (1989). Ennis recognizes, not one but fourteen separate critical thinking dispositions, listed below:

1. Be clear about the intended meaning of what is communicated
2. Determine and maintain focus on the question
3. Take the total situation into account
4. Seek and offer reasons
5. Try to be well-informed
6. Look for alternatives
7. Seek as much precision as the situation requires
8. Try to be reflectively aware of one's own basic beliefs
9. Be open-minded and consider other points of view
10. Be willing to changing one's own position
11. Withhold judgment when the evidence is sufficient to do so
12. Use one's critical thinking abilities
13. Be careful
14. Take into account the feelings and thoughts of other people

The other major theorist, that Tishman has based her model on, is Art Costa and *The School as a Home for the Mind* (1991), who does not use the term thinking dispositions, but instead, in his latest work, refers to “passions of mind” (2009, 32). Costa identifies five key passions that characterise the good thinker:

1. Efficacy
2. Flexibility
3. Craftsmanship
4. Consciousness
5. Interdependence

The concept of thinking dispositions, particularly put forth by the scholars and educators mentioned above, is a kind of the concept of intelligence. The basic concept behind dispositions, sees a large part of being intelligent, means being able to think well. Learners who think well have strong thinking dispositions. Therefore, a large part of being intelligent, means having strong thinking dispositions. The final reason why Tishman's model is suitable for this research, is the similar educational goals for faith formation, that is, to challenge learners to realign their thinking and cultural patterns, to the thinking and patterns of the Christian faith. Thinking is the basis for questions that inevitably emerge from these goals, therefore, the choice of Tishman's model, above other peer models, is a suitable framework to base this study on.

Summary

Asking questions are a vital learning approach from early religious education, during the Old and New Testament times, in three dominant learning environment, domestic, scholastic, and ecclesiastical. Jesus intentionally presents challenging questions to bring specifically bring about a Kingdom worldview. He constantly pings his learners with questions to activate deeper levels of thinking. In a more formal learning environment, Jesus uses aspects of the Jewish *midrash*. The *midrash* searches the Scriptures intently to reflect and meditate on its truths. Questions are used frequently in *midrash* to motivate thinking. In contemporary times, active learning includes, asking questions to move learners to more independent and motivated learning. Effective learning results from interactive small-group discussions, projects, peer feedback and homework, and not much are gained from just listening passively to lectures. There is the need to respect where learners are at and attempts made to introduce new routines, methods and tools to cultivate a learning culture conducive to enquiry, thinking and faith formation. In short, this means that the learning environment itself needs to be an agent of change and the teacher, as model and mentor, needs to be the main catalyst for that change.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PERCEPTION OF CHINESE LEARNERS

Influence of Confucian Culture

Learners from Confucian Heritage cultures (CHC) are being extensively studied, because of their emerging importance in global education today. One of the reasons is that many Chinese people attend academic institutions all over the world, at all levels today. The CFC has many Chinese learners and so an appreciation of their ethnicity in relation to their distinctive learning styles is of significance. Before discussing these points of significance, it is good to bear in mind that ethnocentric assumptions about learners, from China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Korea and Japan exist and differ slightly, when examining the influences of CHC on learning. It is suggested to refrain from the assumption that Chinese learners from this milieu of nations are homogeneous in every way. There are strong and varied cultural differences with Chinese learners from North Asia, East Asia or Southeast Asia and those from Australasia, North America and United Kingdom (Watkins & Biggs 2001). While diversity within any culture is normal, research shows that individuals within a culture tend to have a common pattern of learning and perception, when compared to members of another culture (Worthey 1987, 1).

The Confucian culture has, as one of its tenets, the importance of education for the service of the community, the nation and the achievement of a good and righteous government. As a result, Confucian values under girds a ruthless and competitive education process to prepare citizens for high office and for entering the bureaucracy. The emphasis on one's office is a lauded Confucian value. The corresponding fame and reputation that come with one's position is of vital importance and measures in a hierarchical order to the Chinese. For this reason, people in positions of authority, like teachers, superiors and elders are respected and honoured without the need to legitimise themselves (Littrell 2002).

The Singapore Chinese are predominantly from the CHC. They uphold many of the values of Confucianism, especially those aged 40 and above.⁵ This age group forms the majority (99.9%) attending adult classes in the current CFC under study, therefore, an appreciation of these Confucian tenets and their influence in Chinese learners better aid in the communicating and designing of effective and affective learning episodes in the Singapore CFC. Following, is a discussion on how the tenets of Confucianism relate to the Singapore CFC.

Teachers are Highly Esteemed

To Chinese learners, the teacher is someone to obey and respect because of the authority they seem to possess. The tradition of 'filial piety', is that teachers are expected to be moral, as well as, knowledge models who are efficient in leading and responding to their learners. According to Gerald LeTendre, such a lack of scrutiny or criticism is due to the belief that “knowledge is power” (2001, 639), and therefore, a person who imparts knowledge holds a higher position than the person who learns. As a mark of respect, Chinese learners also tend not to overtly scrutinise and criticise their teachers, therefore, the onus falls on the teacher to display these virtues. Forms of disrespect is the notion that even a small act of criticism or a minor confrontation in any form is considered disrespectful, impolite, aggressive and even hurtful to the teachers. The Chinese deem these actions as a sign of bad education and upbringing.

The negative outcome of such submissive and unquestioning acceptance of learners of their teachers, can lead to negative consequences of indoctrination and abuse of power, if the teachers fall short as moral and knowledge models. In the context of CFCs, Charles Melchert defines indoctrination as “the attempt to impose belief and belief systems on others by authority and by methods which allow little or no room for questioning, when the belief themselves more properly call for a free and critical acceptance” (1974, 19). A more in-depth discussion on the topic is Harkness’ *Educational Indoctrination in Christian Faith Communities* (2002, 33-47). The positive outcomes of Confucian influences demonstrate the respect Chinese learners have for their teachers, allowing the opportunity for

teachers to be a positive influence for both moral and knowledge. Respect for teachers as authority figures produces learners who are likely to be obedient and submissive to their instruction, creating a learning environment that fosters mutual respect, admiration and interest in one another – a loving learning environment.

Loss of Face

The concept of “loss of face” is widely known to be of Chinese in origin and metaphorically means prestige, honor or reputation. Some modifications include *liu mianzi* 留面子 – grant face or give (someone) a chance to regain lost honor; *shi mianzi* 失面子 – lose face, *zheng mianzi* 爭面子 – fight for face or keeping up with the Joneses, and *gei mianzi* 給面子 – give face or show respect for someone's feelings (Ho 1975, 867; Lu Xun 1959, 129). These inferences affect many Chinese authority figures like teachers in some measure and so they can react defensively to anything that challenges their character and capabilities. Any notion to suggest that a teacher has failed in any way tends to be avoided by the Chinese (Sim 2003, 387). Learners will also consider teachers to be bad models or unacceptable trainers if they admit that they do not know something of their craft. Since the teacher is viewed as the expert of knowledge, it is his/her duty to pass it on. If he/she fails to do so, then the teacher has a “loss of face” as a “knowing person” (LeTendre 2001, 639). Hence in a teacher-driven approach, it will be primarily a one-sided, one-way-process, where the teacher stands unquestionable and uncritically accepted as correct at all times. To create more autonomous learners who can think for themselves, both teacher and learner need to view asking questions not as a threat to one’s character and ability, but rather, see asking questions as an important part of learning so that clarification, opinions and diverse options can be shared as a positive and constructive action. Such an environment seeks to provide a safe place for both teachers and learners, which encourages asking questions and the respect for one another in doing so.

Loyalty to Peers

The concept of collectivism in Chinese society is “a preference for a tightly-knit social framework in which members can expect others to look after them in return for total loyalty” (Watkins & Biggs 1996, 225). The Chinese value their group members and are usually determined to achieve collective goals, rather than, individual competitiveness. For this reason, they tend to lean towards more group-related traits and roles. For instance, the Chinese are more trustful and willing to commit themselves in material resources and information as a way to pride in the success of others. Chinese socialisation emphasise sharing, cooperation and acceptance of social obligations, and avoid competition and aggression (ibid). Tradition requires the better and stronger learners to assist the weaker learners in class. Many consider it more as a duty for those with greater ability to assist those with less ability, even if it means helping them cheat in examinations by passing or sharing answers. In such cases, ethical and moral values in learning need to be imparted and taught along with knowledge learning.

The positive effect from collective group discussions achieve higher-quality learning outcomes. Dialogue and interaction between teachers and learners in learning in groups increase the responsiveness to learner needs and preferences (Ramsden 2003, 98).

The Learning Styles of Chinese Learners

The Chinese are people who like to be informed. They prefer to receive their information “wholesale” from the teacher, rather than, attempting to interpret it themselves. They view knowledge as something that is transmitted by the teacher, (the expert), rather than, to be discovered by the learners themselves. Chinese learners name “listening to teacher” as their most frequent activity in senior school classes (Liu & Littlewood 1997, 371). The author views this as a lazy way to learn.

Charlene Sato and Bailin Song’s research that contrasts Chinese learners with non-Chinese learners in class interaction, point to the former making significantly fewer speaking turns than did their non-Chinese classmates. Sato

and Song both conclude the Chinese are more introverted learners who are reluctant to express their views or raise questions, particularly, if they are seen to express disagreement publicly (Sato 1982, 11, Song 1995, 36).

Closure-Oriented and Rule Conforming

The Chinese are closure-oriented learners who dislike ambiguity, uncertainty, or fuzziness. For this reason, they often jump hastily to offer solutions or draw conclusions from incomplete information or analysis. Studies find that Chinese learners tend to be less autonomous and more dependent on their teachers for answers and solutions. They often want quick answers and constant correction from the teacher and tend to feel uneasy with multiple answers or solutions to solve a problem, preferring one final answer or solution instead (Harshbarger et al. 1986, 1; Liu & Littlewood 1997, 371).

Analytical and Concrete-Sequential

According to Rebecca Oxford and Judith Burry-Stock, the Chinese are sequential, orderly and organised, who focus mainly on the details and they excel at mathematical formulas. Labelled as “field-dependent learners” who are “holistically oriented”, Chinese learners are capable of going from the big picture to the small details. People with this learning style can relate information to the overall structure and focus on the interactions involved as well (1995, 153). Oxford and Burry-Stock also state that the Chinese are often detail-and precision-oriented. They have no trouble picking out significant details from a group of items and prefer learning strategies that involve dissecting and logically analysing the given material, searching for contrasts, and finding cause-effect relationships. Chinese learners prefer clear guidelines from the teacher. They also prefer to focus on the present. They demand to have the answer first than draw their own conclusions to it. They are more concrete-sequential learners and use a variety of strategies, such as, memorisation, planning, analysis, sequenced repetition, detailed outlines and lists, and structured reviews that aid a search for perfection.

Many Chinese learners also prefer situations where they have clear rules to follow, indicating a concrete-sequential learning style (Harshbarger et al. 1986, 1).

Thinking-Oriented

Gayle Nelson finds Japanese learners like the Chinese to be more overtly thinking-oriented than feeling-oriented. Like the Chinese, they typically base their judgment more on logic and analysis (rather than on the feelings of others, the emotional climate or personal values). They have a concern for precision and minimal risk taking that indicates a cautious and thinking approach to decisions. It is thus typical that the Singapore Chinese learner needs the time to arrive at the correct answer and is usually uncomfortable when he/she is asked to make a guess on the spot with little preparation (1995,16).

Rote and Memory

A further characteristic of Chinese learners are their tendency to emphasise memorisation, not just as rote learning (learning without understanding), but as part of aiding a deeper learning process. (Entwistle & Tait 1996, 97). This dispels some false notions that memorisation is a less satisfactory way to learn. On the contrary, to the Chinese, memorisation through a pattern of repetition behaviour can become a mechanism to deepen and develop a better understanding. Thus memorisation is not the end-point of the learning, but as the process of achieving understanding. Chinese learners overall are more accustomed to receptive-learning compared to a more pro-active approach preferred by Western learners. Repetition to the Chinese is regarded as a positive way to understand a subject better. The Chinese prefer repeated patterns of learning without the subject content changing or varying too much. To them repeated practices is a form of acquiring knowledge. Psychological and pedagogical studies on Chinese learners (Watkins & Biggs 2001), refer to this paradox of the Chinese learner: how is it possible that Chinese learners who rely so much on memorisation as a learning strategy, outperform their Western

counterparts and have deeper, meaning-oriented approaches to learning? There may be positive aspects to memorisation, a subject left for another occasion.

Need for High Visual Stimulation

Chinese learners are strong visual learners. They prefer learning materials and techniques that involve combinations of sound, movement, sight, and touch that are applied in a concrete, sequential, and linear manner. To them, lectures, discussions, conversations and oral directions, without any visual backup, are confusing and anxiety-producing. Joy Reid advocates that text and blackboard (visual) and voice (audio) work best when they presented together. Using technology in the classroom, aids more holistic learning. It is a commonly held belief among language teachers, in particular, that learners prefer a variety of learning preferences or styles when learning a language (1987, 98). Medical researchers also conclude that the more different neuro-systems are deployed in learning, the better something is learned, and the more easily it is assessed again later. Learners who receive comprehensive instruction in all the skills simultaneously, namely, listening, speaking, reading, and writing, make their learning experiences more stimulating (Hanson-Smith 2000).

Traditional visual sensory stimulation theory has, as its basic premise, that effective learning occurs when the senses are stimulated (Laird 1985, 151). Dugan Laird's research finds the vast majority of knowledge held by adults (75%) is learned through seeing. Hearing is the next most effective (about 13%) and the other senses, touch, smell and taste account for 12% of knowledge. By stimulating the senses, especially in the visual senses, learning is enhanced.

Comparison of Western and Chinese Learning Approaches

A brief comparison of Chinese and Western learning approaches is good to draw out their particular differences in learning environment. Table 1 features the study conducted by Bernhard Reisch and Tang Zailiang in *Teaching and Learning in Japan* (1996, 11) that can also be applied to the Chinese learning environment

as Japanese and Chinese learners are similar in culture and dispositions.

Table 1. Comparison between Western and Singapore Chinese learners

Western Approach	Chinese Approach
Techniques of independent learning	Techniques of rote/memorization
Teamwork	Lecture, report, presentation
Combination of theory and practice	Thorough theoretical knowledge
Discourse/controversy	Students summarise what is taught
Discussion (polarisation)	Integration of different opinions
Analysis of objects and texts	The correct usage and handling
Making comparisons (differences)	Understanding, interpretation
Experimenting	Practicing
Detecting problems	Techniques of adaptation
Work Sharing	Cooperation
Criticising	Imitating
Transformation	Reproduction
Learning is thinking	Learn first, think after
Learning by doing	Learning by acquiring knowledge
Praxis	Theory/Ideal
Active/Expertise	Receptive/Educational

Source: Data from B. Reisch and T.P Tang. *Teaching and Learning in Japan*. 1996, 11.

The major differences in Western and Chinese learners are significant in four major areas. One, Western learners detect problems, engage in discourses, welcome controversies and compare with a critical eye, as they analyse objects and texts. In sharp contrast, Chinese learners tend to adapt their learning to match their understanding, preferring more teacher-directed learning and to know how to handle objects and texts correctly. Two, Western learners embrace teamwork and shared work as a form of independent learning. Chinese learners view the teacher as the sole expert to transmit the information. Three, differences in the techniques of learning between Western and Chinese learners are obvious in the way both groups handle them. Westerners embrace independent learning while the Chinese are more prone to rote and memorisation. Finally, Western and Chinese learners differ in learning philosophies. The Westerner sees his/her learning as being active, dynamic and experimental, with the goal to be an expert in the subject eventually. They like learning by thinking and doing that combines theory and practice as praxis (action-reflection). In contrast, the Chinese see his/her learning

as receiving knowledge from an expert, the teacher. They like theoretical knowledge to be considered educated in the subject. Hence, they learn the theory first and then think around it in a calculated and planned way, avoiding anything experimental. In other words, the Chinese prefer something to work in theory first, while the Westerner will experiment first before formulating a theory around the results of that experiment. The difference between Western and Chinese learning approaches is, the former is directed towards transformation, while the latter sees learning as a transmission of knowledge. The transmission model views education as a specific body of knowledge that is transmitted from the teacher to the learner. This model does not emphasise understanding, as students can simply memorise facts, without truly comprehending what they are learning. This model sees lectures as the easiest method of teaching, where the teacher stands in the front of the class and dictates to the students, but it presumes that all learners are learning at the same pace and level of understanding.

Summary

Learners from the CHCs need an appreciation of their ethnicity, in relation to their distinctive learning styles in the CFC. The tenets of Confucianism emphasise this hierarchy of relationships, with teachers being at a higher level in the social hierarchy. Learning that is predominantly teacher-driven approach is primarily a one-sided, one-way-process, where the teacher stands unquestionable and uncritically accepted as correct at all times. Chinese learners prefer to receive their information “wholesale” from the teacher, rather than, attempting to interpret it themselves. The lack of initiative in the Chinese learning environment, is mostly caused by the Chinese learner’s concept, of the roles of teacher and learners, in which the teacher is seen as an authoritative figure whom learners are to be obedient to. The Chinese view their learning as a product of acquiring knowledge while Western learners appreciate the process of acquiring knowledge. There is a need to develop cultural-sensitive learning methodology that is a cultural-specific approach to suit the need of Chinese learners.. Therefore, rather than, borrow directly from Western models, the learning environment should develop its own methodology against the larger backdrop of Chinese culture.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH APPROACH

Reinstatement of the Research Question

This study seeks to explore to what extent is asking questions a vital learning approach for faith formation in the Asian community of Singapore learners, and how may this approach be developed in the Asian learning context.

As ascertained in the previous chapter, being mindful of the vital dispositions of Chinese learners can better help identify the problem and offer a solution at the conclusion of this study.

Appreciating Chinese learners is an important first step in finding to what extent can asking questions aid in faith formation and how questions can be developed in the Singapore CFC context. First, an appreciation of Confucian tenets and their influence on Singapore Chinese learners, help in communicating and designing effective and affective learning episodes in the local CFC that work along cultural lines. Second, as the Chinese are people who like to be informed, how they want their information delivered is important to them. They want knowledge exclusively transmitted by the teacher as an expert, rather than, learning on their own or with their peers. Approaches like asking questions, need to be sensitive and empathic to these needs of Chinese learners to learn in new ways. For example, since the Chinese are closure-oriented learners and often draw hasty conclusions from incomplete information or analysis, a skilled teacher can ask specific questions to help them achieve deeper clarity and focus in problem-solving at its root, rather than, dealing with just the symptoms. Another characteristic of Chinese learners is their strong visual learning preferences, therefore, developing asking questions need much visual support to lectures, discussions, conversations, and oral discussion, to allow learning to be clear and stress free for the Chinese.

Last, but not least, much of negative experiences of learning environment in the CFC in Singapore today are their tendency to follow Western models wholesale, unquestioned and uncriticised, which often bear no relevance to

Singapore Chinese learners through methods that are foreign to their culture. While the task is not impossible, small steps can be made to bring Chinese learners to discover deeper ways to learn that brings transformation and life change. This is the challenge of this thesis: to explore to what extent is asking questions a vital learning approach for faith formation in Singapore CFC, and how may this approach be developed in the local learning context. Appreciating the characteristics of learners of the CHC is a step in the right direction and the task of the next section is to prove the need for a sensitive relevant and empathic model and ways how to incorporate that in the Singapore CFC.

Mindful of these characteristics of Singapore Chinese learners, this research will observe 66 adult respondents at Church of Our Saviour's Biblical Studies Programme (BSP), part of the myriad of educational endeavours in the adult Sunday school curriculum.

A combination of research methods are employed to ascertain, validate and analyse how asking questions are employed among Singapore Chinese learners, who are generally perceived as passive and reserved learners due to the Chinese ethos (Liu & Littlewood 1997, 371).

Empirical research data from in-class observations will help explain and validate the hypothesis that Singapore Chinese learners tend to be passive, teacher-centric learners, who dislike overt displays of expression including, asking questions. The correlation between the data gathered and the learning environment will then be explored.

Using qualitative and quantitative research, the data collected from tools, such as, interviews and questionnaires, audio/video recordings, field notes and conversations with participants, will be collected and analysed.

Two case studies in the BSP will be compared and their findings will form the basis of validating the characteristics of Singapore Chinese learner behaviours in each context at close range and in depth. Finally, some phenomenological analysis will be attempted as part of the author's personal experience as she interacts and participates in the context of the research.

The thesis presupposes there is value in the act of questioning in learners of BSP. This creates an opportunity to consider the various ways in which asking

questions may be a catalyst and a positive drive towards faith formation. In such a paradigm, thinking, questioning, and reflecting are seen as actions that need to be actively present as part of transformational learning about God, self and others. Both teachers and learners are equally important contributors in a collaborative learning environment in the CFC.

Research Sampling

This chapter explores these issues within one particular faith community, Church of Our Saviour (COOS) of Anglican heritage, yet, unique for its strong Charismatic/Pentecostal stance. COOS is a vibrant CFC with a congregation dating back to its inception in 1975. It has a relatively homogenous population, with most of its 3,300 members coming from the lower middle and upper middle classes of Singapore society. COOS is a parish within the Anglican Diocese of Singapore with a strong emphasis on missions. It believes in the teamwork of members of the clergy (pastors) and laity (lay leaders) working in synergy.

At the time of this research, most have been church members for over 15 years, with a faithful handful still attending COOS for over 30 years. Almost all are English educated and many are bilingual in English and Chinese dialects, in particular Hokkien and Mandarin. The Chinese race is the dominant race, reflecting Singapore's majority ethnic group. Current membership stands at just below 5000, comprising of youths, working adults, parents and retirees.

The jump in membership growth is partially attributed to hundreds of transferees from other Singapore independent churches in the mid-1990s. The new members are assumed to be drawn to COOS' Spirit-filled worship services, sound preaching of the Word, its comprehensive ministries and pastoral care. It is also assumed many of COOS transferees will have experienced some form of CE in their former churches although no research is done to confirm this.

COOS is a suitable case study as it has a long-established CE programme, since the 1980s. Its comprehensive curriculum covers Foundation of the Christian Faith, Bible and Doctrine, Lifeskills, Spiritual Formation and Ministry Skills.

The Case Study

The BSP programme is accredited to Bethany International University in Singapore. The entire books of the Bible are taught in 13 modules in two semesters per annum. Both credit (graded exams) and audit classes are offered simultaneously to cater to the different learning needs of the participants. Both credit (graded exams) and audit classes are offered simultaneously to cater to the different learning needs of the participants. The aim of BSP, as stated in its 2009 brochure, is as follows,

The goal of the BSP seeks to enable participants to study the Bible, rather than about the Bible, placing emphasis on practical applications of Scriptures to life and ministry today. Participants are taught how to “fish”. This develops their skill to handle the Word of God appropriately. For Christians serving in any area of ministry, where strong biblical foundations are needed, the BSP facilitates this crucial development. Vastly different from mere memory of Bible verses, or selective studying of books and topics of the Bible, the BSP teaches the whole counsel of God from Genesis to Revelation. More than just the average equipping course, participants can expect to reap foundational and practical tools that will empower them for their Christian life journey.

Approximately 165 participants attend the weekly night classes, held on two different evenings in the church, and are conducted by two different facilitators using identical syllabi. Class A is an audit programme. Instructional methods include mainly lectures and data presented on Power Point slides. Out of 109 participants, 43 respondents have done the survey. All are of Chinese origin, either from Singapore or from Malaysia, except for one male Singapore Indian.

Class B is a credit class. Instructional methods include solely lectures. Assessments include written essays and module examinations submitted on a weekly basis. For each completed 3-month module, successful candidates are awarded a Certificate in Bible Studies, which accumulates towards a Diploma in Bible Studies from Bethany International University when all 12 modules are completed. All 23 respondents of the survey are of Chinese origin either from Singapore or from Malaysia.

Instrumentation

The research instruments include three approaches employed in the two BSP classes: (1) observations, (2) questionnaires, and (3) face-to-face interviews.

Face-to-face interviews allow the interviewer to “inquire about the feelings, motivations, attitudes, accomplishments, and experiences of individuals” (Borg & Gall 1989, 288). The main advantage of face-to-face or direct interviews allows the researcher to adapt the questions as necessary, clarifying doubts and ensuring that the responses are properly understood by repeating or rephrasing them. A drawback of this method is some respondents may feel uneasy about the anonymity of their responses, when they interact in face-to-face interviews.

In-class observations allow researchers to observe human behaviour in the settings that they normally occur. In participatory observations, a key advantage of this form of research is that often the respondents are unaware that they are being observed, thus allowing their behaviours to be observed naturally. The disadvantage of this method occurs, when the observer is a factor adding to one more one variable in interpreting the behaviours. This means that the results may have some bearing on what is observed, having no opportunity to qualify and quantify those behaviours, thus affecting the quality of the observation.

Questionnaires are an “excellent way to tackle questions dealing with representation and are an efficient means for large-scale data collection” (Fetterman 2001, 14). The benefits of using questions allow a more standardized format to allow objectivity in answering. Some disadvantages of questionnaires include, respondents answering superficially or are not clear on understanding why they need to answer certain questions.

The administration of instruments include the “when”, “where” and “who” questions, response rates, dates and required protocols of good interview techniques, so the research can be deemed reliable as best it can and all instruments employed are replicable at a later date.

Procedure

Having listed the purpose for the choice of research instruments, how they are employed in the study are outlined in the following procedure.

In-class observations, videos, and photographs of both sessions were made, with permissions granted from the teachers and participants. Observations were done unobtrusively to allow class behaviours to be viewed in their natural settings. Data collection demonstrated how questions were facilitated during class sessions and the reactions of both facilitator and participants; notes and/or video recordings and photographs were taken to observe the behaviours of the participants as they responded to asking questions during class interactions between teacher and learner. The on-site observations were conducted over a period of eight weeks in both BSP classes.

Both classes were told a week before that a survey was going to be conducted. Before the exercise, advice was sought from the facilitators to vet the relevance of the questions and to eliminate ambiguous or misleading questions and inappropriate response categories. Questionnaires were distributed to each participant attending Class A and Class B on 23 February 2009 and 5 March 2009, respectively. The questionnaires asked demographic data, as well as, psychographic data of the learners, and in particular, when they were engaged in thinking/active learning approaches. The final results were based on an aggregate score.

Forty three out of 109 members who attended Class A duly filled up the forms during their class time. All 23 members who attended Class B filled up the forms. In total, 66 respondents completed the survey. See a sample of the questionnaire in Appendix 1 on page 116 of this study.

Personal interviews were conducted on a few participants from each class and both facilitators. The interviews were spontaneous and informal to get an instant feedback after the sessions.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Characteristics of the Class

This section summarises the data collected from the respondents in two BSP classes. The *Binomial Distribution Method* takes the two comparative readings from the two classes. The Binomial options approach is able to handle a variety of conditions for which other models cannot easily be applied (Cox, Ross & Rubinstein 1979). In addition, *Fisher's Exact Test* measures the categorical data from classifying objects in two different ways to find the significance of the association (contingency) between the two kinds of classification (Fisher 1922).

Table 2. Age of BSP participants

	Class A	Class B	Stat Diff
Below 35 yrs	6%	21%	NS
35 to 49 yrs	27%	39%	NS
50 to 60 yrs	46%	40%	NS
Over 60 yrs	18%	0%	P<.01
No response	3%	0%	NS

Table 2 shows an equal number of participants aged between 35 to 60 years of age attend both classes with no significant difference statistically. Similarly, a small number of adults aged below 35 years attend both Class A and Class B. The majority are in the 35 to 60 years age group bracket.

Table 3. Membership at BSP

	Class A	Class B	Stat Diff
Below 5 yrs	27%	21%	NS
6 to 10 yrs	30%	21%	NS
11 to 20 yrs	25%	24%	NS
Over 21 yrs	13%	26%	P<.01
Members of other churches	5%	8%	NS

Table 3 shows the length of membership in the CFC. There is no statistical difference between the two classes. Both classes have a similar number of young and old COOS members attending the BSP.

Table 4. Educational level of BSP participants

	Class A	Class B	Stat Diff
Post Graduate (University)	32%	43%	NS
Graduate (University)	6%	13%	NS
Diploma (Poly)	9%	21%	NS
Certificate (Secondary)	48%	23%	P<.03
No response	5%	0%	NS

Table 4 shows no significant statistical difference in all levels of academic qualifications in both classes, but there is significantly more respondents at diploma and certificate levels in Class A. This suggests that Class B, with graded assignments, appeal more to learners with higher levels of academic achievement. Learners with a low critical ability suggest little exposure to thinking and questioning approaches, in their early educational experiences, and tend to look to authority figures to tell them what to do, like, “school”.

Table 5. Working roles of the BSP participants

	Class A	Class B	Stat Diff
Professionals	18%	52%	P<.04
Administration)	30%	4%	P<.03
Retired, homemakers, etc	52%	41%	NS

Table 5 shows statistical differences between respondents in Class A, who hold more administrative posts in their workplaces, compared to respondents in Class B, who are in higher professional jobs, such as, managers, CEOs and entrepreneurs. A similar number of retirees and homemakers attend both classes.

Table 6. Language spoken at home by BSP participants

	Class A	Class B	Stat Diff
English spoken	39%	74%	P<.04
Bilingual (English/ Chinese)	55%	26%	P<.03
No response	6%	0%	NS

Table 6 shows more bilingual respondents attending Class A than Class B. Statistical differences are more significant in the use of English at work and at home by all respondents in Class B. In comparison, Class A has a higher percentage of bilingual respondents. This may suggest that Class A has more Chinese-educated participants, who may find doing tests and exams in English intimidating or they may feel their English is not up to the standard.

Table 7. Learning experiences of BSP participants

	Class A	Class B	Stat Diff
Rote learning & memorisation	41%	30%	NS
Teacher & textbook driven	74%	82%	NS
Problem-based learning	23%	17%	NS
Learner and experience-driven	11%	26%	NS
No response	9%	0%	P<.09

Note: Learners indicated one or more responses in the class survey so final tally was above 100%.

Table 7 shows respondents from both classes listing text-book, teacher-centric learning as their learning approach by choice. Rote learning and memorisation are listed the second most preferred learning style. Problem-based and experiential learning are the least preferred learning method in both classes.

Table 8. Learning orientations of BSP participants

	Class A	Class B	Stat Diff
Learning orientation	62%	95%	P>.03
Performance orientation	44%	10%	P>.04

Note: Learners indicated one or more responses in the class survey so final tally was above 100%.

Table 8 shows significant statistical differences in respondents from Class B with a learning-orientation, and respondents in Class A with a performance-orientation. A learning-orientation describes a disposition to manage his/ her learning intentionally and in a self- directed manner. In contrast, a performance-orientated learner desires proficiency in a topic studied.

Table 9. Dominant learning of BSP participants

	Class A	Class B	Stat Diff
Activists	60%	45%	NS
Reflectors	48%	49%	NS
Theorists	77%	61%	NS
Pragmatists	56%	40%	NS

Note: Learners indicated one or more responses in the class survey so final tally was above 100%.

Table 9 shows both classes displaying a variety of learning styles with no statistical differences between them. This points to a diverse learning environment that calls for a variety of learning approaches to appeal to specific type of learners. The idea that people learn in different ways, was explored by Kolb (1984) and later developed by Honey and Mumford, whose model is used in the survey. They identified the following: the activist, who enjoys the experience itself; the reflector, who spends a great deal of time and effort reflecting; theorist, who is good at making connections and abstracting ideas from experience; and the pragmatist, who enjoys the planning stage.

Table 10: Learning environment of the BSP class

	Class A	Class B	Stat Diff
Well managed	41%	100%	P<.06
No response	59%	0%	P<.06

Table 10 shows significant statistical differences between respondents in Class A and those in Class B, to overall classroom management. Results indicate Class B as being better managed, has the right size, and has a friendlier environment for peer learning than Class A. Good classroom management allows

learners the space and time to interact within the learning and teaching process. Creating and maintaining a stimulating learning environment are achieved through effective classroom organisation, interaction and a safe climate for dialogue and discussion. An environment conducive to learning, does not just happen and is the result of effective classroom management that establishes and maintains learning systems. It is one that is more task-oriented, and where learners are aware of their roles and expectations and those of the teacher's (Sanford, Emmer, & Clements 1983, 56).

Table 11: Learning motivations by priority

	Class A	Class B	Stat Diff
1. Knowledge equipping	77%	87%	NS
2. Lifelong learning	42%	52%	NS
3. Structured learning	40%	73%	P<.03
4. Like different teachers	40%	43%	P<.03
5. Like subject being taught	40%	48%	NS
6. Part of the community	23%	39%	NS
7. As a social activity	11%	0%	P<.01
8. Like the teacher	11%	22%	NS
9. Get a paper qualification	7%	4%	NS

Note: Learners indicated one or more responses in the class survey so final tally was above 100%.

Table 11 shows respondents ranking their reasons for attending the BSP classes which are then compared for responses from respondents in Class B. Class A and Class B both rank knowledge equipping, (1) and (2) in the table, as the topmost priority for attending the BSP classes. Statistical differences in (3) and (4) show that respondents in Class A prefer a less structured approach, with no class assignments or exams to complete. In contrast, respondents in Class B appreciate learning assessments as a measure of their learning. In (5) and (6) in the table, the subject taught and being part of the community are not the main reasons for attending the BSP classes. However, there is a statistical difference in (7) which shows respondents in Class A attending the BSP more as a social activity, compared to more graduate level respondents in Class B. According to Knowles, graduate adult learners are likely to place a lower level of importance on

the social aspects of membership within their courses, as they are more likely to be internally motivated learners (2005, 37). In (8) and (9) both groups of respondents find gaining a paper qualification is not the main motivation.

Table 12. How BSP learners view their teacher

	Class A	Class B	Stat Diff
Feel valued & respected	30%	30%	NS
Approachable	67%	69%	NS
Open-minded	69%	65%	NS
Attentive to my queries	62%	78%	NS
Answers satisfactorily	65%	60%	NS
Experienced/knowledgeable	39%	82%	P<.01
Asks good questions	46%	91%	P<.01
Motivated open-mindedness	38%	57%	NS
Motivated self-directed learning	51%	69%	NS

Note: Learners indicated one or more responses in the class survey so final tally was above 100%.

Table 12 shows respondents from Class A and Class B feeling equally valued and respected by their teachers. Part of this reason may be due to the high esteem Singapore Chinese learners place on their teachers. Both classes also find their teachers approachable, attentive and answering their questions satisfactorily. In addition, teachers who are more open-minded tend to motivate them likewise. Finally, the teaching approaches of both classes have motivated them to learn their subject much more than before. Statistical differences between the two classes show how they view their respective teachers. The teacher in Class B is the more experienced, who asks more thought-provoking questions in class. Adults expect their responses to be acted upon when asked for feedback on the progress of the program (Burns1995, 233).

Summary

Motivating the class to ask questions, allows learners in the BSP classes to engage in more self-directed learning, where the teacher does not merely supply the facts and answers. When he/she provides the stimulus, like a Bible verse or a thought-provoking question, this allows a better flow of ideas. Variables need to

be taken into account, like the age of the teacher, his/her academic qualifications, social status, life experiences, personality, and character, in light of the responses. Yet, the research points to one key conclusion that learning-oriented environment is more conducive for asking questions.

The Culture of the Classroom

This section summarises the data collected from the proceedings, practices, expressions, and experiences of respondents in Class A and in Class B on their specific responses to the criteria outlined in Shari Tishman's *Thinking Classroom* (1995). The model is the framework to conduct the research in the CFC, to see the potential of asking questions and expose evidence of the characteristics of Singapore Chinese learners to validate the discussions so far.

Tishman's Six Key Dimensions

There are six key dimensions outlined in Tishman's model: language, thinking dispositions, mental management, strategic spirit, high-order knowledge and transfer. These aid thinking in the classroom. The six dimensions are embedded in a questionnaire to respondents in Class A and Class B of the BSP on their psychological responses in the learning environment.

Table 13. Language

	Class A	Class B	Stat Diff
Easy to understand/answer	38%	40%	NS
Encourages questions	49%	43%	NS
Prefer questions only on topic	46%	43%	NS

Note: Learners indicated one or more responses in the class survey so final tally was above 100%.

Table 13 shows that using the right language helps identify precisely what kind of thinking needs to take place in order to contribute appropriate responses to the questions asked. There are no significant statistical differences in the teacher's use of simple words to motivate thinking and asking questions in

respondents from both classes, implying that asking questions need not be complicated or formal in delivery. In-class observations show learners tend to offer pat answers when the subject of the questions are too simple. They tend to offer more “politically correct” answers in these cases. This challenges the teacher to create a richer linguistic environment for a deeper level of thinking.

Table 14. Thinking dispositions

	Class A	Class B	Stat Diff
Is a good way to learn	60%	86%	P<.03
Distract the learning	34%	4%	P<.03
Are too tough	53%	60%	NS
Prefer less questions by teacher	64%	9%	P<.06
Prefer less questions by peers	58%	8%	P<.06

Note: Learners indicated one or more responses in the class survey so final tally was above 100%.

Table 14 shows the way questions deal with the respondents’ attitudes, values, and habits, as productive patterns of thinking. Significant statistical differences show respondents in Class B appreciating asking questions as a good way to learn, while respondents in Class A find them a distraction in class. Respondents in Class A prefer the teacher and their peers to avoid asking too many questions in class, while respondents in Class B accommodate and welcome questions. Respondents from both classes find difficulty in answering questions, pointing to some degree of emotional stress generally found in Singapore Chinese learners. An inevitable silence from the respondents usually follows a question, as they appear to struggle with answering the question or it may be a case of avoiding a loss of face, if they fail to provide the right answer.

Table 15. Mental management

	Class A	Class B	Stat Diff
Fill a “gap” in my knowledge	65%	73%	NS
Will ask if others do it first	20%	43%	NS
Are meaningful to me	74%	65%	NS
Prefer to relate to subject	46%	43%	NS
Spur on to think more	39%	43%	NS

Note: Learners indicated one or more responses in the class survey so final tally was above 100%.

Table 15 shows that respondents from both classes view questions as a way to acquire and integrate knowledge through organising it meaningfully for understanding. An example of mental management is when the respondents ask, “What can I think of in order to solve this problem?” When they start to think of solutions, they then gain new insights and meanings, rather than, falling back to old patterns of behaviour without some form of critical reflection. There are no statistical significant differences in both classes in regards to managing their thinking through asking questions. Responses also include asking questions as a way to further knowledge seen in “teachable moments”. Respondents, true to their cultural face-saving ethos, feel more confident to ask questions when they see their peers asking questions first, and when they find the responses from either the teacher or community, encouraging and safe, they will be bolder and start to ask questions themselves.

Table 16. Strategic spirit

	Class A	Class B	Stat Diff
Through them I think better	65%	78%	NS
Prefer being directed to learn	67%	17%	P<.05
Prefer more interaction	75%	73%	NS
Prefer to ask questions anytime	58%	60%	NS

Note: Learners indicated one or more responses in the class survey so final tally was above 100%.

Table 16 shows how respondents use asking questions strategically in their learning in specific and intentional ways. Respondents in both classes appreciate how asking questions help them in thinking better about the subject. Respondents from both classes desire more interaction and less lectures in class. They also like asking questions at anytime during class. Respondents in Class A, with more lower level education, prefer more guided learning, compared to Class B, who are more self-directed and independent learners. Learners in Class B show more characteristics of effective adult learning (Knowles 1984, 12).

Table 17. High-order knowledge

	Class A	Class B	Stat Diff
Help me to think on my	31%	61%	P<.03
Help me be more self-motivated	28%	57%	P<.03
Become more confident	23%	53%	P<.03
Help apply answers to life	51%	86%	P<.03

Note: Learners indicated one or more responses in the class survey so final tally was above 100%.

Table 17 shows significant statistical differences in high-order knowledge in respondents in Class A and Class B. High-order knowledge describes learning that goes beyond merely factual knowledge, towards assimilation, application, and practice. Seeking clarity, being open-minded, engaging intensely in tasks, even when answers are not immediately apparent, show high-order knowledge. Respondents in Class B tend to fare higher in self-directed learning, class engagement, and seem to display more personal confidence. They are seen to be able to have a good grasp on problem-solving, making connections, finding meaning and asking good questions, compared to respondents in Class A.

Table 18. Transfer

	Class A	Class B	Stat Diff
Help me grow more in faith	69%	69%	NS
Impacted core values	62%	65%	NS
Impacted learning about subject	48%	34%	NS
Peers have made an impact	32%	30%	NS

Note: Learners indicated one or more responses in the class survey so final tally was above 100%.

Table 18 shows how respondents from the BSP classes transfer their knowledge and skills in different and varied contexts and so apply widely what they learn, in and out of classroom contexts. Responses are similar from both classes, attributing what they have learnt and experienced in the BSP classes have impacted them and matured them in the faith. While responses show peer learning impacting a small number in both classes, this contrast with the strong collective nature of Confucian Heritage Culture. This may be due to the variables of CFC found in the Singapore Chinese.

Summary

Tishman's model consisting of six principles of language, thinking dispositions, mental management, strategic spirit, high-order knowledge and transfer, is the basis to study the dispositions of the respondents in the BSP classes and to understand how they learn how to think and ask questions. It seeks evidence in finding how learners use their knowledge that go beyond rote learning and instead, reflect on, evaluate and imaginatively, extend the information they are learning. There are many reasons why learners should learn to think skillfully. They do so to make thoughtful life decisions, solve problems creatively, and understand and analyse knowledge across the disciplines. To do any of these things well, learners in the BSP classes need to become adept at thinking things through for themselves.

Research Discussion

This section deals with a discussion of the research findings on the characteristics of the learners in the BSP classes, as well as, the culture that exists in both environment. The purpose of these findings is to validate earlier preconceptions about Singapore Chinese learners being passive learners, in order to gain a new perspective on how asking questions can help in faith formation in Singapore Chinese learners in the CFC. Three main factors are discussed from the research findings.

Factors Influencing Singapore Chinese Learners in the CFC

Confucian virtues

Confucianism (discussed in Chapter Three) is still an important influence among Singapore Chinese learners in the CFC. Being faithful to one's community or clan is a major tenet, which suggests why many members have remained in the same CFC for as long as three decades. The strong evidence of long-term membership in the CFC may be due to the Confucian ethos – 饮水思源

which means, “when you drink water remember the source”. Singapore Chinese learners value the community. Both BSP classes have members who are attending COOS for over 20 years, thus, demonstrating this Confucian virtue.

Another virtue of Confucianism is seen in the way respondents of the BSP esteem their teachers, allowing the opportunity for teachers to be a positive influence for both moral and knowledge. Respect for teachers as authority figures produces learners who are likely to be obedient and submissive to their instruction, creating a learning environment that fosters mutual respect, admiration, and interest in one another. Yet, the weakness in this relationship may see teachers as authority figures abusing their power and feel they can be above criticism. Jesus had bold confrontations with the Pharisees who abused their power, and knew that they still had the respect and obedience of their followers, regardless of what they did (Mt 12:34). Jesus (and in many ways Paul), displayed the opposite attitude by serving their community in humility. In many ways, Jesus and Paul exposed their corrupted actions because they were motivated by a higher moral standard than merely status and the status quo. For the loyal Singapore Chinese, they may need to discern good and bad teachers and “test every spirit” (1 Jn 4:16), and not be led blindly by wrong teaching because of their Confucian ethics.

Passive learning dispositions

Singapore Chinese learners tend to be more thinking-oriented than feeling-oriented and have a greater concern for precise information and guidelines (Nelson 1995, 3-18). This is observed in Class A and Class B where participants tend to be passive learners who dislike overt displays of expression. These learners appear more comfortable sitting and listening to a lecture than being engaged in discussions with their teacher or even among their peers. Honey and Mumford (1982) match learning stages with learning styles. They categorise theorists as learners who stand back to think things through in logical steps, assimilate disparate facts into coherent theories, and are rationally objective and tend to reject subjectivity and flippancy.

Singapore Chinese learners are also seen to offer a correct answer than to offer a quick response without some prior thinking and processing (Condon 1984, 40-41). While it suggests a more reflective-theorist learning style, the results from the data point to both classes displaying a variety of learning styles with no statistical differences between them. This calls for a variety of approaches to appeal to each group of learners.

According to Kolb's (1984) dominant learning skills, the accommodators prefer doing things like, carrying out plans and experiments, and involving themselves in new experiences. They tend to be more risk takers than people with the other three learning styles. On the other hand, the convergers dominant learning abilities lie in the practical application of ideas. They prefer to learn in an organised manner, through hypothetical-deductive reasoning. He/she can focus well on specific problems. The divergent dominant learning style excels in the ability to view concrete situation from many perspectives. The assimilator's dominant learning style is his/her ability to create theoretical models through inductive reasoning and assimilating disparate observations into an integrated explanation. As with the converger, the assimilator is less interested in people and is more concerned with abstract concepts. For him/her, it is more important that the theory be logically sound and precise, rather than, fuzzy and inconclusive.

Low risk tolerance

Singapore Chinese learners, like many from the Confucian Heritage Culture, appreciate the value of asking questions, but usually do not ask them in class out of respect of the teacher which they esteem highly. At the same time, they avoid the risk of a loss of face if they appear unknowledgeable by having to ask questions. This trait is observed more acutely in respondents from Class A suggesting that as more are lower-educated, they are either shy, not confident or simply avoid calling attention to themselves with asking questions in class.

Steve Burns explains that an adult's emotional response can affect learning. Some adults can approach formal educational settings, with anxiety and feelings of high or low self-efficacy. Their approach to new learning contexts can be influenced by how they appraise or evaluate the new experience. For example,

when an exercise is about to begin, two adults in a classroom may interpret the exercise in two diverse ways. One has a feeling of 'excitement', while the other person interprets the exercise that leads to the feeling of "embarrassment".

It is self-evident how an individual interprets the situation and the subsequent emotion that arises, affect the kind of action the individual will take. (Burns 1995, 16). Burns considers that such appraisals, coupled with labels, such as, 'fear' or 'anxiety' can lead some learners to emotionally disengage from the source of discomfort that is the learning experience. John Dewey states that asking questions, as with thinking and reflecting, are best done through intimate social interactions (1933, 8). A remedy for this is for both the teacher and learner to work towards cultivating a climate that encourages asking questions. Such an environment will provide a safe place to express opinions and diverse options. Asking questions can then challenge all participants in the CFC to discover new answers (Roehlkepartain 1993, 62).

Discipleship faith stage

Respondents from Class A and Class B both rank knowledge equipping, as the topmost priority for attending the BSP classes. Acquiring knowledge is of utmost importance to the Singapore Chinese. They are people who like to be informed. Janet Hagberg (2004) in *The Critical Journey, Stages in the Life of Faith*, rank learners along the stages of faith formation as: recognition of God (Level 1); the life of discipleship (Level 2); the productive life (Level 3); the journey inward (Level 4); the journey outward (Level 5); and the life of love (Level 6). According to Hagberg, learners who are at the knowledge acquisition stage, generally indicate a discipleship level in their faith formation.

Socialisation and fellowship are the key motivators to attend bible classes (51). This is true of a small number of respondents in Class A, who rank socialisation as a reason to attend the BSP classes. Fowler (1971) defines stage two in developmental theory as "mythic-literal" faith, mostly found in school children. According to Fowler, people in stage two have a strong belief in justice and reciprocity in the world they live in. Their belief systems tend to be anthropomorphic, that is, story characters, deities and mythology take on human

characteristics. Both Hagberg and Fowler are similar in their estimation that learners, like those in the BSP classes, are still learning what it means to be a Christian. Acquiring knowledge on how to transit to live this new life, is the focus of learners at this stage.

How do respondents in the BSP classes acquire knowledge? Respondents in Class A display a more performance-orientation, while Class B display a more-learning orientation. A learning-orientation describes an individual's disposition to approach, manage, and achieve his/ her learning intentionally, and in a self-directed manner. Phrases like “chew on it”, “have a think” or “your comments are important” are common invitations in a learning-orientated environment. The goal of this kind of instruction is that the process of learning itself provides the motivation to learn. Learners, in turn, see learning as beneficial to their own self-development (Marshall 1987, 8). In contrast, a performance-orientation points to a learner’s wish to become proficient in a topic to the best of his or her ability. External or key performance indicators, such as, grades, do not influence his/her sense of satisfaction, instead, a sense of deep engagement with the task and knowing how to achieve greater perseverance in the face of setbacks, motivate learners who are performance-oriented (Elliot 2006, 111).

Lifelong learning

The appeal of lifelong learning means that Singapore Chinese learners put a high value on education even in their later years. Both groups of Singapore Chinese respondents put a high value on education even in their later years as shown by the matured ages of the attendees in Class A (Table 2), some of whom have been members of the CFC for over 20 years (Table 3). The capacity for attaining these knowledge and skills, tend to play a predictive role on the specific education level in older people. This means that older adults can enjoy higher levels of knowledge in areas that need not be measured through common intelligence tests (Schaie 2005, 528). Studies by Margaret Beier and Philip Ackerman show that a need for intellectual stimulation in older adults is high and typically increase across the rest of adulthood in most elderly people. Current affairs, academic facts, and health related information correlates positively with

age (2001, 615). Psychologist Raymond Cattell coins this syndrome *crystallized intelligence*, which refers to the knowledge and skills that are accumulated over a person's lifetime. Cattell's research also confirms that this type of intelligence increases with age (1941, 592), therefore, it is encouraging to see many older Christians still willing to attend Bible classes even at such a late age. Part of the reason suggests an urgency, and the constraints, mortality imposes. Older adults on average, compared to younger adults, are more likely to pursue emotionally meaningful goals, to make sense of themselves, God and others (Lindberg 2008, 15). This may be the reason why a good number of older learners, aged over 60 to 80 years, attend the BSP classes, making them committed lifelong learners, who seek to expand their faith horizons and "count their days" (Ps 88:4).

Development theories identify adults aged between 20 to 34 years to be in Stage 6 of development, where adults seek love and intimacy, with a readiness to make long-term commitment with other adults. At this stage, their questions are likely to be, "am I loved and wanted? or "shall I share my life with someone or live alone?" as they try to relate to society and fit into its patterns of collaboration and corporation (Wilder 2003, 5). If respondents in Class B are attending BSP to seek God for answers and guidance to questions regarding love and relationship with God, self and others, asking questions towards this end will be relevant to them.

Adults between the ages of 35 and 65 years are identified as Stage 7 in development theories. This stage seeks renewal, regeneration, as against stagnation, in a person's life. At this stage, questions like "will I produce something of real value?" indicates the need for meaning and significance, education, and some form of productive social involvement. If respondents in Class B are seen to think this way, then it is assumed that attending the BSP classes, is a way to find value and meaning through studying about God, self and others in order to teach and guide the next generation.

Early education experiences

Culture and learning are connected in important ways. Early life experiences and the values of a person's culture affect both the expectations and

the processes of learning. The final factor affecting the learning styles of Singapore Chinese learners is in their early education experiences. If they have grown up with authoritarian, teacher-centric and book-driven learning approaches, with minimal interaction in the classroom, they are more likely to carry over these preferences into their CFC (Rao 2001; Westerhoff 1976; Worthley, 1999).

What learners carry over from earlier learning experiences also concerns Bruner. He sees the role of structure in learning is central in teaching and the best approach to be taken should be a practical one. He states, “if earlier learning is to render later learning easier, it must do so by providing a general picture in terms of which the relations between things encountered earlier and later are made as clear as possible” (1960, 12). This suggests that Singapore Chinese learners must be taught in effective learning methods from a young age to inculcate good thinking dispositions. This is the responsibility of both the home and the school, a discussion that is best taken up on another occasion.

Achievement differences

The relationship of culture and learning style is also seen in learning achievements. Most researchers believe that all learning styles are neutral and they can be effective, if they avoid being overused, or applied inappropriately. This theory explains the success or failure of different learning approaches with different tasks, especially as they relate to expectations in the classroom. There is evidence that, regardless of their cultural background, learners do have intrinsic dominant learning styles but have limited opportunities to use their style strengths in the classroom.

Howard Gardner finds cultural practices tend to produce “learners who are proficient at learning in their own culture, yet, may appear dysfunctional in a culture that embraces a divergent or opposing set of assumptions” (1991, 53). This suggests disregarding behaviours that certain cultures foster, causing a dysfunction that affects the student's potential for successful achievement. Caught in a no-win situation, learners are unable to be true to their culture and, yet, meet school expectations.

Jacqueline Irvine and Darlene York suggest, “the cultures of students of color or their ‘way of life’ are often incongruous with the expected middle-class cultural values, beliefs, and norms of schools. These cultural differences are major contributions to the school failure of students of color” (1995, 489). This theory suggests that designing educational experiences, curriculum, and instruction should match the cultural learning styles of learners to improve academic achievement. The cultural learning styles concept goes a step further by stating that cultural upbringing plays a decisive role in determining how learners learn. This study has somewhat proven this in Singapore Chinese in the CFC.

Rita Dunn, however, caution teachers to emphasize learning style strengths of the individual, rather than, his or her culture and to match instruction to individual preferences. She warns that cultural learning styles should not be used to establish limited style categories for members of any cultural, national, racial, or religious group. Students, who do not perform as well as their peers in traditional classrooms, tend to differ from each other in learning styles, even when they share the same cultural background (Dunn 1997, 74). This points to an important conclusion that culture is not indicative of how people learn.

Culture of the teacher

Another unresolved issue is how teachers, working from their own cultures and teaching styles, can successfully reach the diverse learning community in the CFC today. What training do teachers need for this challenge? Christine Bennett is not the only one who believes that “to the extent that teachers teach as they have been taught to learn, and to the extent that culture shapes learning style, students who share a teacher's ethnic background will be favored in class” (1986, 96). Bennett also warns that ignoring the effects of culture and learning style affects all students:

If classroom expectations are limited by our own cultural orientations, we impede successful learners guided by another cultural orientation. If we only teach according to the ways we ourselves learn best, we are also likely to thwart successful learners who may share our cultural background but whose learning styles deviate from our own (116).

Teachers, too, may exhibit a teaching style preference, despite knowing they ought to teach in a number of different styles. They tend to naturally teach to their preferred learning style, so, they may find it helpful to identify their own learning style to help understand why their learners tend to learn likewise. Bennett identifies steps that teachers can take to make learning a success for all students regardless of their cultural backgrounds (203f). They are:

1. Know their own teaching and learning styles
2. Determine how far to stray from these preferences
3. Begin with a few students, those who are having difficulty in class
4. Know the learning style patterns that characterise that ethnic group
5. Build classroom flexibility slowly, adding one new strategy at a time
6. Use all modes (visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic) when teaching

Class management

According to Knowles, smaller teacher-learner ratio allows for an environment conducive to adult learning, that is, friendly and informal. He suggests, the enthusiasm and commitment of participants (including the teachers) is akin to a “club atmosphere.” An organised course suggest a better instrument for “new learning of an intensive nature”, but according to Knowles, a club experience provides the best opportunity for practicing and refining what is learned (1950, 125). Rita Dunn and Kenneth Dunn (1978) write that learners identify their preferred learning styles, score higher on tests, have better attitudes, and are more efficient, if they are taught in ways which they can easily relate to. It is to the educator’s advantage to teach and test learners around their preferred styles. Although learning styles will inevitably differ among learners in the classroom, Dunn and Dunn believe that teachers should try to make changes in their classroom, so that the material taught will be beneficial to every learning style. Some of these changes include, room redesign and the development of small-group techniques. Respondents in Class A rate classroom management lower compared to respondents in Class B, suggesting the large teacher-learner ratio may contribute to this result as one variable. Class B has a smaller teacher-

learner ratio and a warm and friendly climate is observed, with participants enjoying the fellowship of peers in the classroom.

Factors Contributing to a Thinking Culture

Tishman's model is suitable as a criteria to base the findings of the survey as it offers a more concrete, systematic and holistic view of developing a "thinking culture", where asking questions can play a vital role in cultivating better thinking in the CFC and, in turn, provoke asking questions and aids faith formation.

Use of rich vocabulary

From in-class observations of both classes, both facilitators tend to ask more text-driven and knowledge-acquiring questions, with an emphasis on learners to reply with simply the correct answers. The language used at these sessions is simple and it cues the respondents to present simple answers. Learners tend to offer pat answers, and so miss an opportunity to think critically around the issues that will impact their thinking and practice further.

Both classes find that the use of simple words is easy to understand. Yet, more than 50% of the respondents in both classes indicate that they will be motivated more if challenging questions are asked. Jack Seymour and Donald Miller recommend questions that lean towards questions of personal meaning, as these encourage the personal development in learners (1982, 14). Here is where the most affective learning takes place because it addresses the self-esteem, values, attitudes and inner motivations of individuals. It is, therefore, good to find ways to incorporate questions of personal meaning in learning episodes. This includes life application of the biblical text studied. Moreover, through their own inquiry, respondents discover for themselves something of meaning, that is, theirs to own and keep.

Teachers are well-meaning, but often have a misguided notion that learning should be easy and so use simplified language to help make difficult materials more attractive and assessable. Can the linguistic environment be simple and, yet, achieve the same desired results? It may appear so.

Question (Teacher): What does Paul mean when he refers to the term
 fragrant offering in Ephesians?
Answer (Learner): It means our lives must be pleasing to God.
Teacher: That's right.

An opportunity is lost when learners just offer a pat answer they have read or heard somewhere without searching it out on their own. To them, it appears giving the right answer is sufficient to know about faith, but that will not teach them to live the faith. In order for learners to gain a far richer understanding, the question needs to be more deliberate and intentional in directing a specific kind of thinking. This allows for deeper thinking of the subject. Here is how the same question (above) will sound if it is re-cast with a much richer vocabulary, using convergent and divergent questioning techniques and engaging the five senses for a highly visual simulation in the mind.

Question (Teacher): Search in the Bible for the first time that the
 fragrant offering is first mentioned? What comes
 to mind? What vivid sights and smells describes
 the ritual of sacrifice? Can you imagine the scene?
So then, what does Paul mean when he refers to
 the term fragrant offering in Ephesians? Why is it
 significant to the original hearers? Ponder that for
 a moment before suggesting why it is still
 significant today?

Here, the use of probing questions allow for multiple responses, not only from the learner, but also allows responses from other different learners who may like to try and answer one of its components. In this way, probing questions encourage a variety of perspectives for a deeper understanding and aide a more meaningful discussion as a result. Probing questions help learners in the process of learning holistically.

The aim is not to ask just any question that produces correct knowledge-based answers, but the kind that will provoke learners with questions they honestly care about and they can internalise to impact their thinking and practice. The role of the teacher, then, is to guide learners in finding the answers for themselves and to encourage these learners to ask new questions, as they seek for more answers. Helping them acquire skills on “how to learn” than “what to

learn”, when information is presented, will make it a more affective form of learning and, in turn, a more effective practice of faith.

Teachers generally tend to simplify language, thinking that learning is made easier for their learners. Learners are prevented from receiving the cues they need to manage and guide their own thinking, by an over-simplification of vocabulary.

Good thinking dispositions

In terms of thinking dispositions, there are significant differences between respondents in Class A and B, in regards to their responses to questions. Fewer questions that are asked by the teacher and their peers are deemed somewhat distracting to respondents in Class A. In contrast, respondents in Class B see them as an effective way to learn. From in-class observations, respondents in Class B tend to engage more with questions from the teacher, but show less engagement and interest towards questions pose by their peers. From these observations, the body language of those responding tend to direct their questions only to the teacher, indicating they want his sole approval and commendation. This points to the strong hierarchical relationship that exists between the teacher and the learner that is driven by Confucian virtues.

When someone is described as a good thinker, it means he/she consistently displays tendencies to act in thoughtful ways. This implies good thinking is usually expressed in visible actions and behaviours and not about “being smart.” It is an abiding tendency in a person who can put good thinking into practice (Tishman 1995, 42).

The potential for cultivating good thinking dispositions is seen in respondents in Class A who are activists and pragmatists, but this potential remains untapped. This means that unless these respondents are motivated to think, most remain passive in the classroom. Other variables can be the teacher-learner ratio of 1:109 and/or class management. In contrast, respondents in Class B demonstrate more thinking dispositions as they are observed as actively engaging in the CFC. Part of the reason may be due to a smaller class size with a teacher-learner ratio of 1:23.

Learners in Class B also come ready to engage each week and even expect an engagement from the teacher. Therefore, the potential for good thinking dispositions are displayed through good thoughtful actions and behaviours in the respondents in Class B. This can be attributed to the teacher who cultivates a habit of consistently asking questions week after week. He also asks a variety of questions for a variety of reasons. For example, at the start of each lesson he will ask a series of questions pertaining to administration, course work and how his learners are coping with the exams and tests. He asks questions of personal concern, prompting answers from the class and creating a friendly and caring atmosphere that continues over several weeks. In time, it is observed that a habit of questions and answers have become part of the culture of this classroom.

Other factors include the facilitator himself, and his skill in asking the right questions that provoke curiosity, systematic thinking and persistence to solve problems. During the lessons, a variety of questions from the Biblical text provoke thoughtful questions even further. This may be the reason why learners in Class B give higher ratings to: (1) seeing asking questions as an effective way to learn; (2) welcoming questions from peers and their teacher during class (3) making asking questions as personally meaningful; and (4) asking questions to help in life application. Respondents in Class B also display a willingness to engage more in asking questions and are encouraged by a growing sense of community that shows “we are all doing this together” as they meet each week. With their teacher modeling good thinking skills and a caring disposition, learners become more aware of their thinking and actively seek out new information and to be open to other viewpoints.

Since evidence of thinking dispositions need to be demonstrated through visible thoughtful actions, according to Tishman, being passive or reflective are not effective to measure good thinking dispositions. Learners need to be seen practicing them in activities, such as, asking thoughtful questions and the behaviours that come as a result of them applying what they are thinking about. This is vital to cultivating critical thinking where asking questions play an active role as part of the whole process.

What makes a person think well? Thinking well are not dispositions that transmit like a piece of factual knowledge. According to Tishman, thinking dispositions come from diverse sources and require consistent nurturing. Like a plant, most dispositions are rooted in habits, motivations, ritual, values, desires, beliefs, tradition, policies, and other such factors that manifest over time (40). Hence, the teacher plays a vital role in cultivating thinking from all these fronts, promoting alertness, providing a safe environment for ask questions, fostering values and encouraging dialogue. This is a complex procedure, and is only acquired within, and influenced by the culture of the learning environment (41). When learners have a communal sense of “doing this together”, the potential of a thinking culture is made more possible. A hindrance occurs when individualism and an unwillingness to engage with the teacher and peers in class take place.

Why are thinking dispositions more important than knowledge acquiring?

Tishman believes that good thinking dispositions help learners in the following two ways (43). One, they make learners more aware of their existing thinking patterns, while, at the same time, acquire new ways to think. Yet, the teacher needs to be diligent in examining learner’s thinking habits and be watchful for opportunities in their learning episodes. Without this awareness, thinking patterns among learners and teachers are unlikely to change. Two, they help internalise tendencies that learners carry over from their current learning experiences into their future thinking situations outside the classroom. By developing good thinking dispositions, learners are more likely to approach new thinking situations in a more informed and organised way.

To build a thinking disposition in the classroom, regular practice in class creates a well-practiced tendency over time. Asking questions aid in cultivating sustained habits in the mind. When learners feel safe to ask questions, they can then start to fine tune their questions to be more precise. Good thinking dispositions are displayed in learners when:

1. They are curious and questioning, looking beyond what is given
2. They think broadly, are adventurous, open minded and flexible
3. They can reason clearly and carefully, seeking clarity and precision

4. They are able to organise their thinking in a logical and orderly way
5. They value “thinking time” and thus put in the effort to think

Therefore, asking questions for developing these thinking dispositions are essential to putting good thinking into practice. Engaging in discussions to detect the limits on how learners think around a situation and looking for sensitive responses to opportunities for thinking, bring a positive experience into the learning situation. The teacher needs to first model what it means to be adventurous and provide a safe haven for learners to take risks in their thinking. Singapore Chinese learners like to follow and obey their teachers. They can acquire these skills in no time.

Knowledge management

In general terms, mental management is simply the ability to think about one’s thinking (Tishman 1995, 67). Mental management is also teachable. The best opportunity to observe how successfully learners integrate knowledge, is to observe the actual reactions between themselves and their teacher. Class A has more respondents who are less independent in their thinking and desire more teacher guidance and intervention. This may account for the general passivity in the class compared to the activity in Class B. The high-level of professionals found in Class B mean that they are used to more independent decision-making and will take the responsibility for their own learning, as independent learners.

Goal setting

An important part of developing thoughtful adults is the ability to set one’s own goals and standards. It requires thoughtful planning to personalise these goals in light of one’s core capabilities and tendencies. Behaviour that seems to show signs of mental management is noticed more in Class B than Class A. The learners in Class B demonstrate more responsible and independent thinking who opt to do coursework and sit for exams, despite their busy work schedules. This shows a passionate, determined, and disciplined character. The other factor is that many come to class knowing what they want to achieve as their learning goals.

Carefully planning their exam dates and committing to them in a decisive way, is a sign of good mental management. In face-to-face interviews, almost all the respondents in Class B view taking exams positively as way to teach them “how to learn” and to “learn about learning” in a structured environment. The teacher in Class B implements a good approach for mental management by asking questions in these four ways on a regular basis each week:

- Step 1: He gives learners time to get ready to think by asking various questions on administration matters, like exam dates, passing up papers, going through possible test questions. These create a natural response by learners, yet, at the same time, it lays the ground for a relaxed atmosphere for future enquiry. This kind of “small talk” builds relationships with the learners through answering their queries and concerns.
- Step 2: He directs the learners to meet their goals and sets the standards by explaining in detail what he expects from them. He tests their understanding by asking questions.
- Step 3: He reminds the learners to keep up with their goals and monitors their progress in class through asking questions.
- Step 4: He asks learners to reflect on their thinking reminding them that the discussion is not about getting the answers right, but how did they think through the issues.

From in-class observations, these steps appear to create a positive impact on learners in Class B, allowing them to set their own learning goals and to manage their thinking. It also requires some thoughtful planning on the teacher’s side to apply them intentionally in his teaching episodes. Bruner observes in an age of increasing spectatorship, “motives for learning must be kept from going passive...

they must be based as much as possible upon the arousal of interest in what there is to be learned, and they must be kept broad and diverse in expression” (Bruner 1960, 80). Instructors, who design more self-autonomous learning environments, act more as coaches, guides, and facilitators, to help learners arrive at the “true” questions; the things they really care about. When this happens, they become more motivated to learn and to develop a sense of ownership about their learning (Bruner 1961, 22). Contrary to the belief that asking questions are usually unstructured and ad hoc, the fact is, good questions tend to be intentional and specific to acquire a certain learning outcome. They require planning, preparation, and a certain pro-activeness from the teacher, as the teacher's role needs to be different for each learning episode. At times, he is an administrator, and at other time, he is a caring parent, a motivational coach, an emphatic listener, or a fellow pilgrim as the occasion calls for it.

Diverse learning methods

The Confucian saying, 因材施教 means, “the teacher should teach differently according to every student's condition”. This suggests that cultivating a strategic spirit requires a less rigid procedure in acquiring knowledge, and not a “one-size-fits all” approach. Truly versatile thinkers can construct, invent and modify a thinking strategy to meet the unique demands of the situation at hand.

In faith formation, applying Bible knowledge to real life situations are a vital way to mature in one's faith. From the results, respondents from both classes feel sufficiently motivated to seek self-regulated and autonomous learning. Part of this approach is COOS', somewhat creative curriculum design, to offer two different classes simultaneously each week to cater to the different learning preferences of their participants. Offering the same syllabus, but with two different learning approaches, has created the following results. One, it reaches more learners combined each week in the way they would like to learn. Two, the classes can be adaptable, meaning learners can attend Class A to listen to their teacher of choice, and still do the exams in Class B, to satisfy the requirements of the paper certificate. This allows learners to sit under a variety of teachers who

come with their unique experiences and perspectives on a given subject. Offering such learning choices aid learners to regulate their own learning.

Strategic planning

The low motivation to think and question in the Singapore Chinese learner is the belief that “much effort leads to success” (苦尽甘来), or somehow the “right answer will spring up if they simply try harder” (有志者事竟成). As a result, learning strategies, such as, memorisation, sequenced repetition, detailed outlines and lists, structured review, and a search for perfection tend to be more affective learning approaches for them (Harshbarger et al, 1986). It is more effective to introduce thinking strategies on how to think incrementally, so that learners can move away from old “schooling” methods they are accustomed to, and begin to learn more affectively as adults.

Asking questions aids strategic thinking by allowing the learner to stand back and construct a plan on his own, with the teacher, or with others in the learning community. Asking questions like, “what do you all think?” or “has anyone got another idea or has something to add?” and so forth, are simple questioning techniques to invite thinking in class and provoke a response.

The strategic spirit energises learning because using thinking strategies are an effectively way to engage with a subject matter. For example, listening passively to a lecture about Paul’s missionary journeys can be more actively engaging, if learners can imagine themselves in Paul’s shoes, as he prepares for his journey, and what decisions he has to make on the way. By letting learners imagine themselves in a simulated situation, they are forced to think broadly about their goals and options, if they are put in a similar situation. Learning becomes more engaging and memorable, as learners arrive at their “true” questions, the things they really care about, as they develop a sense of ownership in their learning.

Cultivating the strategic spirit requires learners to design their own strategies, to move away from the easy-fix and ready-made solutions to life’s problems. The role of teachers is to cultivate versatile thinkers who can construct, invent, and modify a thinking strategy to meet the unique demands of their

personal situations. Employing the strategic use of asking questions, enable learners to inquire more deeply, creatively and independently, to gain more diversity of knowledge. The strategic spirit in learning allows learners to make thoughtful decisions in real-life settings, applying what they learn in class to their own situations in real life.

Going beyond just facts alone

High-order knowledge goes beyond learning the facts and skills of a subject and moves towards intentional application and decisive practice. Intelligent people develop habits in the mind to respond to asking questions by giving answers that provide a satisfying explanation through real world examples. Successful high-order knowledge is the result of thinking in three levels: problem-solving, explanation, and inquiry (Tishman 1995,132). Asking questions that are incorporated in the learning episode help in developing deeper thinking dispositions are effective when:

1. Questions are applied to real life case studies to activate the three thinking levels – problem-solving, explanation, and inquiry
2. Emphatic, thoughtful and sensitive questions of personal meaning allow learners to feel safe to share their stories with others as real concrete studies.
3. Questions aid more self-autonomy in learners that maximise reflective engagement with little intervention. Singapore Chinese learners have to move out of linear learning strategies, like guidelines, detailed plans, and structured questions, in order be more independent learners.
4. Questions encourage learners to ask more questions when the teacher and learners offer feedback to one another. Singapore Chinese learners should do so without the fear of embarrassment and loss of face.

Transferring the learning to life

Transfer happens when learners are able to transfer their knowledge, skills, strategies, dispositions, and habits acquired from one context to apply them in another context or contexts. Learners get more mileage out of what they learn through the mechanism of “transfer”, defined as a “phenomenon of human thinking and learning”. Tishman’s definition of *near transfer* is seen when after learning to drive a car, the person will not find it difficult to transfer that knowledge to drive a truck, as the skill and practical experience is similar.

Far transfer, on the other hand, connects contexts that are remote from one another. For example, the principle of playing chess can be transferred to business strategies in real life, even though that knowledge is acquired initially in the game (158). This transfer includes a variety of knowledge and skills that learners can implement in other learning settings and experiences.

Most educational practice assumes that what is learned, is automatically transferred and will take care of itself (160). Unfortunately, the transfer most teachers hoped for do not occur spontaneously as it is assumed. Learners are generally plagued with “inert” knowledge and skills, i.e., “knowledge stored up in the memory that does not get activated in useful circumstances” (160). While factual knowledge can be recalled when learners are tested for it, sadly once they go out of the classroom it is not applied or forgotten altogether.

Knowledge and skills remain inert in the memory when it does not get activated or applied in useful circumstances.

Why is teaching for transfer important? It is important because it aids the development of critical thinking skills in learners that can carry that thinking over to abilities and aptitudes to other settings. It cannot be assumed that transfer will occur spontaneously or automatically, therefore, teachers need to intentionally engage learners to transfer their skills in varied contexts, to gain knowledge over a wider spectrum. In addition, teaching for transfer help learners think deeply about what they are learning and to make deliberate connections across subjects in different contexts, both in the class and out of the class.

Respondents from Class A and B see transfer evident in their lives, when they report what they learn and experience, as they attend the BSP classes.

Teaching for transfer is a serious responsibility for Christian educators, if they desire to see the faith community mature into deeper levels of faith as Christians, who will know what it means to be a follower of Christ and a citizen of the Kingdom of God.

Factors Causing Limited Success for Asking Questions in the CFC

CE requires a deliberate and strategic approach to move learners to a deeper understanding of God, self and others. To this end, the study explores the compelling role of questions, in creating a powerful learning environment in the CFC. It shows affective learning taking place, when learners ask questions, yet, too many classrooms still revolve around teacher-generated questions. This research recognises that it takes time and diligence to become an effective questioner. Asking questions is integral to acquire information, build understanding, generate reflection, and apply to life what is learned.

Questions build a context for shared understanding that challenges learners to think critically and allows for various entry points for learning, based on the interests and needs of the learning environment. The study recognises that thinking and asking questions are the essential components of learning and is committed to explore to what extent is asking questions a vital learning approach for faith formation in a Singapore CFC, and how may this approach be developed in the Singapore learning context. The results point to a limited potential for asking questions in the current CFC, due to four main factors.

Stagnant and slow growth level in faith formation

The research first brings to awareness that learners attending the BSP classes are at the discipleship level in their faith formation (Fowler, 1971; Hagberg 2004). At this level, learning aims at providing the means to deepen a personal and collective understanding of the Christian faith, in order to facilitate spiritual connections between the teachings of the Bible to life application. Matters of faith like, current beliefs, faith journey, and how the life of faith is lived out, are some examples of this level of spiritual engagement. At the lower level it denotes

black and white thinking. This kind of thinking involves a situation in which only two alternatives are considered, when in fact there are other options.

Closely related is the failure to consider a range of options and the tendency to think in extremes. At the discipleship stage, learning is a process of reading and studying scripture, both alone and in small groups. It will be as Bishop O'Neill from the Episcopal Church in Colorado, describes,

Our growth in faith does not happen accidentally by sitting passively in a pew. Christian faith is not something we absorb as if by osmosis. Our formation requires not only our attention, but our intention. It requires our time, our care, our commitment. Our formation as disciples demands an ongoing disciplined life of prayer, regular participation in the sacramental life of the church, a practice of studying the scripture, of fearless self-examination, reflection within the fellowship of the Body. Formation is a life-long process requiring a life-long commitment.

Learners at this stage seek understanding, challenge societal norms, and assess their personal daily practices against biblical teachings. This is an excellent opportunity to address questions around these topics. The learning paradigms identified in the CFC are that Singapore learners are at a discipleship level. The discipling learning environment is conducive to asking questions because learners at this stage are needing to know about their faith. In Acts 14:21-23, Paul and Barnabas “made many disciples” at Derbe (and probably in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch). From the report, learners are strengthened, encouraged, appointed and empowered. They are established in their inner life, feelings and emotions in the faith, by teaching, warning and encouragement (Acts 6:4; 15:36, 41; 16:5, 18:23, 20:1, 2, 30).

Collinson believes teaching the elements of the Christian faith to new believers at this stage is an essential component of disciple-making (2000, 12). Jesus, Paul and Barnabas dedicated much of their ministry time doing this. The current CFC, has many learners being members of the church for more than five years and some as long as twenty years. This hardly describes them as new believers or converts in the faith. The question is asked, when is maturity complete? Is there no further development after a certain stage in life? Burns thinks that while children at approximately the same age are at approximately the

same stage of development, the same cannot be said of adults. Adults would vary in levels of knowledge and also in their life experiences. There could be said to be tremendous variation in adult experience (Burns 1995, 227).

Inability to go beyond knowledge-acquiring

Learners in a knowledge-acquiring learning environment tend to dichotomise those who know and those who need to know (Harkness, 1996). They tend to look to their teachers for answers. Teachers, in turn, feel it is their responsibility to take charge, to structure the learning environment and to meet these needs. Unfortunately, the formal education structure makes everything rigid and uniformed. Part of the reason for this, is the “mental set of those who teach remains often at the level of instruction and the reality is that the possession of information and the retention of knowledge are perceived as the major criteria” (General Synod Board of Education in Harkness, 1996). Bruner’s notes on a theory of instruction suggests questions of predisposition, structure, sequence, and reinforcement in making the case for education as a knowledge-getting process:

To instruct someone... is not a matter of getting him to commit results to mind. Rather, it is to teach him to participate in the process that makes possible the establishment of knowledge. We teach a subject not to produce little living libraries on that subject, but rather to get a student to think mathematically for himself, to consider matters as an historian does, to take part in the process of knowledge-getting. Knowing is a process not a product. (1966, 72).

In terms of faith formation, appreciating knowledge as a process and not a product is central. Robert Banks talks about this growth process, in reference to almost all of Paul’s epistles that feature a reference to acquiring knowledge as,

... it is through faith alone that the process of becoming a Christian begins, and it is knowledge about Christ that alone makes it possible... Paul says that growth takes place within the community only as its members are increased with, enriched by, renewed through and filled with knowledge (1994, 69).

This growing knowledge of the Bible, and its early form, the Torah, is God's written testament and his way to communicate with his people with facts and information. There is a place for knowledge in the CE. Sara Little (in Seymour & Miller, 1982, 21), maintains a positive view of knowledge acquiring and sees its fundamental importance in three ways: (1) for understanding God, self and others in relation to faith formation; (2) for informed decision-making, that arises from knowledge; and (3) for believing, as a result of understanding and making decisions and acting on those decisions (43-48). Knowledge acquisition has its affective properties. Denham Grierson is concerned that knowledge is not just directed at personal growth, but has at its end, the corporate mission of the Church. He states, "what the church believes and teaches informs and directs its life and mission today" (1995, 14). This seems to echo Paul's description of the Corinthian Christians, when he rebuked them as milk-Christians (1 Cor 3:2), who constantly need a nanny to feed them with answers for everything in life. Current trends in society have produced a predominantly intellectual orientation that dominates everything.

Research done on effective church growth by the Institute for Natural Church Development (2009) shows that churches will experience numerical growth after growing the spirituality of existing members. Learning at the discipleship stage, first, provides the means to deepen their personal and collective spirituality. Learning at the evangelism stage, facilitates more spiritual connections. This stage allows learners to be equipped with spiritual gifts and improving the quality of their Christian experience. With the deepening in faith formation in members, CFCs find external membership growth as a natural result, as their members' spirituality deepens, their efforts to minister and to evangelise for Christ increase.

Teachers, therefore, need to fit into the role of mentor, guide or facilitator, rather than, a "guru" or transmitter of knowledge, in the same way one dispenses proverbial sayings. Jackie Smallbones suggests, "... Christians should not dare to teach until they have articulated clearly what they believe being a Christian to mean" (1990, 56).

Stifled by cultural influences

Asking questions is a missed opportunity in cultivating an enquiring mind in Singapore Chinese learners in the current CFC, because of the strong Confucian influence, evident in their current learning approaches. The Confucian culture is rooted in placing a high status on educated persons, and for this reason, they esteem teachers highly and above criticism. Acquiring knowledge is important to the Singapore Chinese, as they are people who want the respect as well-informed people. Unfortunately, these learners do not advance beyond the traditional teacher-driven and textbook school instructional model (Westerhoff 1976, 23). This creates a missed opportunity for an authentic learning experience for faith formation that may even be counter-productive in time. Over time, these accommodations become routine and integrated into beliefs and practices of the Christian community, becoming inseparable from its life (Rheenen 1997, 173).

Summary

Factors influencing Singapore Chinese learners in the CFC are due to strong Confucian virtues and passive learning dispositions, that include, low risk tolerance and the fear of failure. They are mainly at the discipleship faith stage and while they embrace the benefits of lifelong learning, learning approaches tend to be influenced by their early education experiences which they carry these preferences over to their CFC. Part of the problem is the achievement differences, especially when Western models and subjects are the focus of study. While they are confident in the vernacular, they feel insecure in this alien approach. The culture of the teacher plays an important role of which the success is seen in how they design and manage their classes. In regards to factors contributing to Tishman's criteria to measure the six dimensions of thinking, the BSP respondents are seen to appreciate many aspects of this theory. As for factors pointing to possible success for asking questions for faith formation in the CFC, it has resulted in a limited potential, due to the stagnant growth level in faith formation, the inability of learners to go beyond mere knowledge-acquiring and assimilate their knowledge, partly because the learning environment is stifled by their culture.

CHAPTER 6

TOWARDS A MODEL FOR CE

An Integrated Model

The discussion, so far, points to four salient points that need to be kept in mind, while finding a suitable model for asking questions as a learning approach for faith formation in the CFC. The model, below, suggests a possible approach for faith formation in the Singapore Chinese learning context.

Co-relation of Roles and Expectation of Teacher and Learners

The thinking strategies of Tishman (1995), and the corresponding action steps by Morgan and Saxton (2006), is a suitable framework to see the co-relation between the roles of teachers and learners and their corresponding actions. When applied to the learning environment, it aids asking questions.

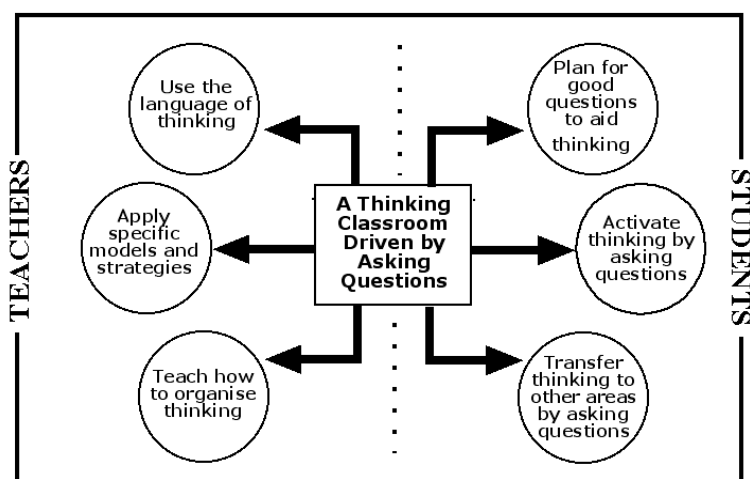


Figure 1. Roles of teachers and learners

The suggested model in Figure 1 shows the roles and actions by teachers and learners in synergy with one another. The result of practicing together, as

teachers and learners, suggests a holistic learning community, both corporately, as well as, individually, for faith formation.

Table 19. Roles and corresponding actions for teachers

Roles (Tishman 1995)	Expectations (Morgan & Saxton, 2006)
Uses the language of thinking when asking questions	The teacher is able to construct and dispense well thought out questions
Asks strategic questions to cultivate thinking rather than just knowledge equipping	The teacher anticipates the potential responses to the question. He/she considers the questioning technique as a learning device and is deliberate, intentional, and thoughtful about the questions and answers
Teaches in a way help organise meaningful thinking in learning that is present in high-order knowledge	The teacher gives participants time to think before answering. Adding a <i>wait time</i> or <i>think time</i> after posing questions yields: (a) more participants volunteer answers; (b) participants provide longer answers; (c) participants' responses are more creative, evaluative, and analytical; (d) Participants generate more questions

Source: Tishman, Shari, David Perkins and Eileen Jay, *The Thinking Classroom: Learning and Teaching in a Culture of Thinking*. MA: Simon & Schuster, 1995. Morgan, Norah and Juliana Saxton, *Asking Better Questions* Canada: Pembroke Publishers, 2006.

Table 19 shows the specific roles of teachers, as suggested by Tishman, with the corresponding actions adapted from Morgan and Saxton. The use of the language of thinking when asking questions requires the teacher's ability to construct and purposefully dispense well thought out questions that are strategic to meet the outcome and objective of that particular learning. Jesus using questions to change the worldview of his learners is one example (Wanak, 2009, 167). When asking questions to cultivate thinking, as opposed to just knowledge questions, it is important for the teacher to anticipate the potential responses to the questions. In other words, when considering the questioning technique as a learning device, teachers too must be thoughtful about both the questions and the answers. Teachers who teach in a way to help organise meaningful thinking in

learners, allow participants some time to think before answering. Giving participants a bit of time to think before answering the question yields significant results in more participants (Morgan & Saxton 2006, 96).

Table 20. Roles and corresponding actions for learners

Roles (Tishman 1995)	Expectations (Morgan & Saxton, 2006)
Plans for good thinking by having questions ready on hand to ask in class	The learner creates dialogue where everyone's thoughts, feelings, and actions contribute to an individual and collective understanding. Learners who effectively respond to the teachers' questions actively listen, concentrate on their thinking process, and take note of their own and others' answers
Activates thinking by being engaged in the lessons	The learner asks questions to think more critically and be more reflective. It is also a way to learn instructional practices, especially the "how" questions
Transfer what is learnt in intentional and deliberate ways in a variety of contexts	The learner has an ability to provide answers based on his/her myriad experiences

Source: Tishman, Shari, David Perkins and Eileen Jay, *The Thinking Classroom: Learning and Teaching in a Culture of Thinking* MA: Simon & Schuster, 1995. Morgan, Norah and Juliana Saxton, *Asking Better Questions* Canada: Pembroke Publishers, 2006.

Table 20 shows the specific roles of learners, as suggested by Tishman, with the corresponding actions adapted from Morgan and Saxton. Learners should plan to have questions ready to ask in class. This creates dialogue in which everyone's thoughts, feelings and actions contribute to individual and collective understanding. Learners who respond to the teachers' questions, engage in active listening, as they concentrate on their thinking processes, and take note of their own and others' answers in the learning community. Learners who ask questions tend to think more critically and are more reflective towards their learning, as they make connections with the material in meaningful ways (Bruner 1961, 21). It is also a way to learn instructional practices, especially the 'how' questions in order to transfer what is learned to a variety of contexts.

Discussion

Table 19 and Table 20 list the vital roles of collaborative relationships between teachers and learners. Jane Gorman quotes Paulo Freire, a proponent of this societal structure, as a paradigm to move learners to realise they have the power to transform these structures through active collaborative approaches, between teacher and learner as opposed to passive “banking education”. Freire uses the term banking education to describe and critique the traditional education system. The name refers to the metaphor of students as empty containers, which educators deposit knowledge into. This produces a lack of critical thinking and knowledge ownership in learners, which eventually makes them feel oppressed (1970, 57). Students should be active participants in the learning process. In a cooperative learning environment, where teachers and learners play their roles correctly, it will develop learning not only about knowledge, that is, facts and figures, it will be more about developing about skills. An example of this process-driven approach sees learners through exercising and practicing particular skills, allow them to learn in ways that build efficacy in it.

Summary

The roles and actions by teachers and learners in synergy with one another is the result of practicing together and fulfilling their roles and expectations. Teachers and learners can then engage in a holistic learning environment, both corporately and individually. A *gestalt* dimension exists in such an environment and transforms the community life, as different questions are asked at the different stages of spiritual growth. Thinking and feeling are essential components in learning that respects and encourages questions. It is committed to helping both teachers and learners ask the appropriate questions, provide a variety of learning stances, roles, and situations, that will elevate authentic learning. Teachers should act as expert guides, rather than, masters. The rigidity of the relationship and the formality of the two roles, learner and teacher, should diminish, and in its place a warm, emphatic and empowering shared relationship between the two instead.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

The Thesis Revisited

Faith formation requires a deliberate and strategic approach to move learners to a deeper understanding of God, self and others. Teaching and learning in a culture of thinking was one approach this study explored. It suggests one method in active learning, asking questions and to what extent can they be a vital learning approach for faith formation in a Singapore Chinese learning community, and how may this approach be developed in this learning context. The conclusion is that thinking dispositions which create enquiring minds are learned through the process of enculturation. This suggests learning that is transformational, rather than, transmissional. From the research, the cultural bed that best cultivates asking questions is a culture of thinking in the learning environment that fosters good thinking in a variety of ways and through a two-way process between teacher and learner with implementations on two fundamental levels.

Implications for CE

The conclusion drawn from this research, are based on the assumption that the life and mission of the CFC is to *form and transform* its members to what it means to be a Christian. This calls for CE to examine its role in the continuum to equip the people of God in the faith. Inherited patterns from culture, traditions, symbols, systems, worldviews and behaviours are significant factors in the life of the community. The challenge for the CFC is to consider appropriate learning paradigms to help its learners mature as Christians within their own socio-cultural and historical contexts. To what degree can asking questions be a vital learning approach for faith formation, depends on how the CFC nurtures its people within these contexts. Four key factors are influential for asking questions to be an affective tool for learners.

Create a community of enquiry through gestalt

A thinking environment fosters innate curiosity and willingness to explore and learn. It leads to “questioning, reasoning, connecting, deliberating, challenging, and developing problem-solving techniques” (Lipman 2003, 20). Both teachers and learners are involved in finding a holistic understanding of the subject, as they engage in authentic inquiry. There is a *gestalt* dimension to this learning environment, where asking questions and the community of learners merge into a single transformative concept of the community of inquiry (84). It is developmental, as faith grows at each stage. It raises different questions at each stage of the learner’s faith journey.

The role of the learner in all this is empowerment, allowing him/her to take responsibility for learning that is transformational. Gorman (2001) states:

It is the learner who finally interprets and decides to adapt his/her own life to truth, and to take steps of integrating and actively living out the implications of reconstituted insight. This does not mean teachers are passive spectators with no responsibility (37).

Instead, the role of the teacher is

Influential in teaching for formation... a mindset for giving learners more responsibility for their own living and learning; critical reflection’s role in provoking movement; the way Scripture is meant to impact our hearts and live; and an increased emphasis on thinking theologically to foster spirituality... building new structures for understanding; greater emphasis on the affective’ contributions of the community, including mentoring; and active involvement in one’s own learning. The final element is that of recognizing the mystery that spiritual transformation is a work of God beyond our control and manipulation (40).

This may take an overhaul of CE towards one that is more holistic, inclusive, and practical than the current model and towards new paradigms for learning and provides a helpful framework for combining learning in community, character development, spiritual formation and action-reflection. The opportunities for asking questions of the “how” and “why” to achieve these objectives are enormous.

Place the responsibility on learners

CE needs to give learners more responsibility for their own learning. This kind of independent study is a process, a method and a philosophy of education, whereby a learner acquires knowledge by his/her own effort and is able to develop the ability for enquiry and critical evaluation of the knowledge acquired.

Using the parent metaphor, matured adults beget children as a sign of being responsible for their own lives and be responsible for others. Being kept perpetually at a discipleship stage of faith formation all through their Christian life, prevents believers from making quantum leaps in their faith that go beyond the initial saving faith stage. They remain immature disciples who are passive and apathetic learners. This may result in their being ineffective and inefficient Christians, due to a lack of transformation from the learning experiences. Learners that stay unaffected by their learning, assume they know the Christian faith, as a measurement of having learnt it. The issue compounds when learners see their learning motivated more by their cultural ethos, which is the case for learners who come from the CHCs. Learning has a different purpose for them.

The outcome of CE is to fashion God's people to become mature in Christ (Col 1:28), therefore, CE calls for an adjustment in learning methodologies, that spark an increased awareness in the lives of learners in the CFC; what it truly means to be a follower of Christ. The challenge for CE is to provide the correct amount of guidance without providing too much direction. Direction help learners identify areas of difficulty, but too much direction detracts from their sense of ownership of the learning project (Raaheim & Wankowski 1981). After all, the Confucian ethos defines education as both, the Seeker of truth 谋道者 (literally, one who seeks after logos) and Practitioner 实践者. This suggests one who runs after his/her own learning.

Cultivate critical thinking dispositions

The type of learning, that education theorists believe, garners the most results for transformation, is critical thinking. In the crucible of critical thinking, asking questions is at its core. Challenging assumptions to gain meaning results in new insights, that move learners away from previously binding limitations.

Creating a thinking environment, suggested through Tishman's model, help towards letting go of past trusted paradigms to embrace new experiences that can bring formational change. For instance, when Christians endure hardship and learns to trust God in a new way, they then can view similar situations with a new confidence (2 Cor 1:8-10).

If CE can bring current life events into the classroom, that challenge the thoughts and behaviours of its learners, they will feel safe to find solutions to problems, that may not necessary be the "correct" answer, as so often is required by the school paradigm, but through critical thinking begin to renew the mind, in and through these things.

View Scripture as life

Bible knowledge is not a badge of achievement on the ladder of faith formation. Viewed as reality to be believed and lived, the Word of God connects to all aspects of daily life. Faith is active when learners begin to be aware of the new insights, practices, interpretations and perspectives that change their current worldview to one that is in line with a Kingdom worldview. To achieve this, CE needs to construct an environment that raises these consciousnesses to link life's situations to biblical guidelines. By doing so, the Word is more than just facts and figures, or a study of words and their definitions, but rather, it becomes a transforming factor for the learner.

While knowledge-acquiring has a place in CE, faith is fundamentally an issue of an awakened spirit, that has an encounter with the person of Jesus. Without understanding what the Christian life is, and uncovering the fullness of what it means, to "know" is impoverished if the Christian faith is reduced to mere knowledge of the facts about the faith.

Simply, faith formation is an awareness and an openness to which it cannot be explained because it is beyond the limited knowledge of a believer. Unless it is lived and the sum of those experiences are assimilated into the believer's life, faith formation is a missed potential. CE needs to ask the question, when is Christian maturity complete?

Choose the right teachers

The teacher is the single most important factor for improved efficacy in learners. Results from a study involving 60,000 students by Paul Wright, Sandra Horn, and William Sanders concluded, that the most important factor affecting student learning is the teacher. The immediate and clear implication of this finding, is that seemingly more should be done to improve education by improving the effectiveness of teachers than, by any other single factor say the researchers. Effective teachers appear to be effective with learners at all levels, regardless of the levels of diversity in learning styles and dispositions. Under an ineffective tutelage, students tend to achieve inadequate progress academically, regardless of how similar or different they are regarding their academic achievement (1997, 63).

CE teachers need to be first autonomous and enquiring learners themselves. The sum of their experiences that encourage the development of independence, are then better able to impart those learning experiences in the classroom,. The autonomous teacher gradually reduces direction and support, as the learner increases in maturity and confidence. Such a teacher will move his/her learners towards these independent learning goals: (1) learn to seek biblical truths by themselves; (2) plan a balanced life; (3) discover their own learning purposes and learning styles; (4) make adjustments from child (dependent) to adult (independent) learning. This goes beyond merely knowing and remembering, to thinking and analyzing; (5) pursue complex questions that go beyond pat answers (Marshall & Rowland 1993).

Balance the purposes

The purpose of the CFC is understood in terms of the ministry to God, to believers and to the world (Mat 28:19). In terms of CE, the CFC has an obligation to nurture believers and build them up to mature in the faith. Paul's own goal is not simply to bring people to initial saving faith but to "present everyone perfect in Christ" (Col 1:28). Paul also teaches the church of Ephesus that God gave the church gifted people,

to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching... (Eph 4:12-14).

According to the New Testament pattern, frequently modelled by Jesus and Paul, the goal of CE is not only to bring people to initial saving faith. They need to also present to God, every Christian who is matured in Christ (Col 1:28), and who becomes qualified to teach others (2 Tim 2: 2); in obedience to Jesus' command of all disciples to make disciples (Mat 28:19).

The purposes of the CFC need to be kept in balance. This means if the CFC only emphasises its worship and prayer practices, it will end up with inadequate Bible teaching to its members. Their understanding of Scripture will remain shallow, resulting in being immature Christians. Likewise, if the CFC neglects evangelism and making disciples for Jesus, it will cease to grow and influence others, becoming ingrown and eventually wither. A CFC that places edification of its members as a purpose that takes precedence over worship, prayer or evangelism, will produce Christians who are puffed up with knowledge on Bible doctrine but ineffective in the spiritual things of God, knowing little of the joy of worshipping God and telling others about Christ.

The CFC needs practical models, as well, as a *gestalt* dimension towards doing CE. Revelation is not gained through osmosis or a gradual, often unconscious, absorption of knowledge, through continual exposure, rather, it comes from deliberate and intentional learning experiences in the spiritual disciplines, one's life experiences and an ever deepening relationship with God through his Spirit.

In a fast-paced, globalised nation, like Singapore, Christians are struggling to grapple and cope with complex issues they face everyday, that challenge their faith, beliefs and values. At the same time, as Singapore becomes an increasing knowledge-based and digital-driven economy, Christians may tend to look to other sources like, one-minute gurus, light Christian reading, online teachings and seminars, for quick answers to their pressing questions, rather than, seeking God

in deep intimate relationship and looking to his Word on their own. If these trends are left unchecked, in due time, the next generation in the Singapore CFC will never know the difference between bible.com and the Bible. For in the Bible are the keys to a vibrant and authentic life transformed to a life in Christ.

Suggestions for Further Study

One of the concerns that surface, because of this research, and worth further study is to cultivate a distinctive Singapore CE that goes beyond mere knowledge-acquiring approaches. While the discipleship level of faith is a good entry point, the CFC must equip its mature adult believers to go on to higher stages of faith formation and fulfill the mandate of the Great Commission. Such an approach enables members to be independent and autonomous learners of their faith. The process of this experience will help them evaluate their present efforts at disciple forming and later, to plan specific disciple-making ministries in the future. This means, CE needs to realign its methods to be relevant to ways people are learning outside the walls of the CFC regardless of their cultural influences. If theorists conclude that all learning approaches are not synonymous to the culture of the learners but rather to them as humans, it give much scope for developing active learning strategies conducive to adult learning regardless of what culture they belong too. Adults learn in similar ways.

The second concern is CE, despite its efforts, still produce learners at the discipleship level of faith formation, making them stagnant in their growth. Much energy keeps them in their comfort zone of knowledge equipping, creating a false sense that they know all about their faith. Adults in the CFC, who are serious about what a Christian truly is, in a holistic sense, need to be equipped for the next stage of their faith, that is evangelism or ministry. The CFC must find ways to develop the two central callings of the Christian faith, that is, (1) faith that is meaningful and richly connected to Christ, and (2) committed relationships within the family of God, in service that extends the Kingdom of God. This is not the sole responsibility of CE alone but the whole CFC.

Endword

A key challenge facing CE in Singapore today, is to remain relevant, dynamic and vibrant, to equip believers to become better thinkers and practitioners of their faith, amidst a clamorous world, that is declining morally, ethically and spiritually each day. CE should aim to prepare its teaching ministries to address the needs of a new breed of believers, who are instructed in the same way they have been exposed to, at their places of work, recreation, and in academic institutions, that increasingly use state-of-the-art learning methodologies like, problem-based, peer-based and experiential learning, in more visual stimulated environment. Learners need to be fully engaged in their learning and asking questions foster an enquiring mind, to make informed choices, challenge their thinking and transform their minds to think from a Kingdom worldview.

What I have attempted to do in this study is to present an account of the state of a specific CFC as it really is, to find out what it should and can be. In the process of exploring these issues, the quest for an authentic Singapore CE model is the driving force behind the hypothesis. We need to ask the question, what are we educating our CFC for?

My vision is to see my CFC exhibiting an affective CE ministry in a positive learning climate, where we are encouraged to practice asking questions in the way that comes naturally to us. My community will be discussing the issues of the day in our local, as well as, global communities through a Kingdom framework. We will be seeking an informed opinion. We will look to the Bible and to our own tradition's doctrine for perspectives, views, and foundations to construct new ideas and conceptual development. The evidence of our thinking is reflected in both our worship and our congregation's activities. The spiritual transformation in us will be both personal and communal. Is not the goal of CE to lead us to believe, that we meet with God, that results in our whole-life transformation, that we follow him successfully to eternity, by faith and not merely through knowledge, but through a deep understanding (Hebrew יָדָה - yā·dah) of who we are in Christ? The answer is yes.

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APPENDIX 1

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Before you complete this survey, please sign and fill the date and your name in above as consent. Thank you.
2. This form may take you approximately 10 minutes to fill in.
3. Please return the forms in class to Karen Hoisington.
4. All information given will be kept strictly confidential.
5. A copy of your questionnaire is made available anytime.
6. Let the Holy Spirit guide you to answer these questions prayerfully.
We appreciate your thoughtful feedback and comments.

Tick where appropriate

Personal Particulars	
<p>Age: _____</p> <p>Membership in COOS _____yrs</p> <p>Nationality: _____</p> <p>Others specify: _____</p> <p>Academic Level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Education: <input type="radio"/> Post Grad <input type="radio"/> Undergrad <input type="radio"/> JC/Poly (circle one) <input type="radio"/> Secondary School <input type="radio"/> Others _____ <p>Academic Qualifications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Certificate <input type="radio"/> Diploma <input type="radio"/> Under Grad Degree <input type="radio"/> Post Grad Degree <input type="radio"/> Professional <input type="radio"/> None 	<p>Race:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Chinese <input type="radio"/> Indian <input type="radio"/> Eurasian <input type="radio"/> Others _____ <p>Languages spoken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> English at home / work <input type="radio"/> Chinese dialect at home / work <input type="radio"/> Malay at home / work <input type="radio"/> Tamil at home / work <input type="radio"/> Others _____ <p>Occupation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> CEO/Director <input type="radio"/> Manager <input type="radio"/> Executive <input type="radio"/> Administration <input type="radio"/> Professional <input type="radio"/> Homemaker <input type="radio"/> Retired <input type="radio"/> Others _____

How do you find your teacher's instructional style in your present class?:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> The teacher is encouraging <input type="radio"/> The teacher allows me to reflect <input type="radio"/> The teacher makes me think better with new insights and understanding <input type="radio"/> The teacher helps me apply the lesson in my everyday life
My earlier education experience from primary school to tertiary is:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Rote learning and memorization <input type="radio"/> Problem based learning through projects <input type="radio"/> Text book and exam driven <input type="radio"/> Experience and discovery driven
How are you motivated to learn?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> I believe ability leads to success <input type="radio"/> I like to be judged on good performance <input type="radio"/> I like to achieve the best <input type="radio"/> I am competitive <input type="radio"/> I will go for help if I can't do a task
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> I like to know the theory of something <input type="radio"/> I think through problems step by step <input type="radio"/> I like to organize messy data into an organized framework <input type="radio"/> I like to analyze things <input type="radio"/> I value principles, models and systems thinking
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> I believe ability leads to success <input type="radio"/> I like to be judged on good performance <input type="radio"/> I like to achieve the best <input type="radio"/> I am competitive <input type="radio"/> I will go for help if I can't do a task
How do you learn best?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> I like to be involved in new experiences <input type="radio"/> I like the here and now <input type="radio"/> I am open minded and not skeptical <input type="radio"/> I like brainstorming when tackling problems
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> I like to stand back and ponder experiences

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ I prefer to observe first ○ I like to listen to others first ○ I like brainstorming when tackling problems ○ I involve the observation of others 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ I like to know the theory of something ○ I like to think through problems step by step ○ I like to organize messy data into an organized framework ○ I like to analyze things <p>I value principles, models and systems thinking</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ I will try out new ideas if someone helps me ○ I prefer to search out new ideas on my own ○ I prefer to think through things carefully ○ I prefer less talk to get on with the task at hand ○ I am a little impatient when things are not done properly or fast enough 	
Learning environment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It is well-managed and organized YES/NO If NO, please give reasons: ○ _____ ○ _____ ○ _____ ○ _____ <p>Just the right size of participants YES/NO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It has a friendly climate YES/NO ○ I like learning together with others YES/NO 	
Purpose of attending	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To advance myself in knowledge ○ To gain a paper qualification ○ To keep up as a life long learner ○ As a social activity as I have free time ○ It forces me to focus on the Word in a formal way as I am too busy otherwise ○ It develops other ways to learn as we sit under different teaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ I like to be part of the learning community ○ I like the teacher ○ I like the subject being taught

Please tick (5) being MOST or (0) being NONE

What impacts you about the sessions?	5	4	3	2	1	0
1. I have gained more knowledge						
2. I have gained new skills and ideas						
3. I have gained new success and confidence						
4. I am satisfied with the lessons						
5. The lessons changed by lifestyle						
6. I can apply immediately what I learned						
Language	5	4	3	2	1	0
1. The questions are easy to answer to						
2. Simple words encourage questions						
3. I prefer questions focussed on the text						
4. Asking questions bring up new topics						
Attitudes	5	4	3	2	1	0
1. Feel valued when questions are answered						
2. Asking questions is a good way to learn						
3. The questions are too tough!						
4. The questions distract our learning						
5. I prefer more direction on what to learn						
6. Less questions by teacher please						
7. Less questions by students please						
Motivation to Learn	5	4	3	2	1	0
1. Questions help fill a “gap” in my knowledge						
2. I am motivated to ask questions when others do it						
3. Questions add to my knowledge to can apply to my life						
4. I find asking questions very meaningful and significant						
Self-Directed Learning	5	4	3	2	1	0
1. By asking questions I think better						
2. The teacher motivates me to be more self-directed						
3. I prefer more lecture style and less interaction						
5. I like to ask questions anytime in class						

Cultivating a Habit of Thinking	5	4	3	2	1	0
I am prepared to think on my own						
This class motivates me to develop a habit of thinking						
I am more confident to ask questions						
The teacher has made me more open minded						
The teacher stimulates me to ask questions because:						
a. He is approachable						
b. He is open-minded						
c. He is attentive to my queries						
d. He answers satisfactory						
e. Experienced & knowledgeable						
f. Asks good thought provoking questions						
Changing Values	5	4	3	2	1	0
1. This class has made me more matured in the faith						
2. The lessons impact my core values personally						
3. The way the class is conducted has made the impact						
4. My peers have made the impact						

Thank you for your time to fill this questionnaire. God Bless.

Comments