

A CASE STUDY OF GRADE 12 INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS
OF THE IMPACT OF A BIBLE CURRICULUM AND THE TEACHERS' DELIVERY OF
THAT BIBLE CURRICULUM IN A CHRISTIAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

by

Rachael Ann Peterson

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate the perceptions of the impact of a Bible curriculum and the teachers' instructional delivery of that Bible curriculum on grade 12 international school students at an open enrollment Christian international school in Asia. The theories that guided this study were Kohlberg's moral development, Fowler's faith development, and Piaget's cognitive development theories (Fowler, 1991, 2001; Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977; Piaget, 1972). The study's central question is: How does the perception of both the content of a Bible curriculum and the teachers' instructional delivery of that Bible curriculum affect students at an open enrollment Christian international school in Asia? The participants were six grade 12 students currently enrolled at a Christian international school within Asia. Data were collected using individual interviews, weekly journal responses, and focus group interviews. Analysis of data used Yin's (2015) five phases of qualitative analysis and Saldaña's (2015) first cycle coding, in vivo and initial codes, followed by second cycle coding, pattern codes, that emerged into five common themes. These themes were (a) authentic learning, (b) interdisciplinary connections, (c) personal ownership, (d) teacher presence, and (e) tolerance. The findings revealed that a teacher's demeanor and delivery methods impacted student perceptions of the Bible class, rather than the content. Students engaged in authentic and active learning perceived a deeper understanding and learning of the content. When a connection between the Bible content and other subject areas was made, students perceived an impact on their faith and worldview development. Lastly, when tolerance was exhibited, it gave students the sense of safety to share and discuss their opinions, which further enhanced their understanding of the Bible.

Keywords: Bible curriculum, Christian international school, high school, perceptions, teaching methods.

Dedication

Above all to God be the glory and honor. He was the one who brought me to a foreign country and created within me a passion for Christian education, specifically, a desire to see His Kingdom expand through Christian international schools.

To my parents who have supported and encouraged me to follow the Lord's leading in my life, which led me to move overseas, and their continual support as I continue to live and work overseas. You may not have fully understood this dissertation process, but your encouragement was always perfectly timed. I love you and am proud to be your daughter.

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I would like to thank my committee members Dr. Fyock, Dr. Bingham, and Dr. Kitterman for their time, guidance, encouragement, and constructive feedback throughout this process. Thank you for your quick responses to emails and thoughtful edits throughout this process.

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Table of Contents

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| ABSTRACT | 3 |
| Dedication | 4 |
| Acknowledgements | 5 |
| Table of Contents | 6 |
| List of Tables | 10 |
| List of Abbreviations | 11 |
| CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION..... | 12 |
| Overview..... | 12 |
| Background..... | 13 |
| Situation to Self..... | 15 |
| Problem Statement..... | 15 |
| Purpose Statement..... | 16 |
| Significance of the Study..... | 17 |
| Research Questions..... | 19 |
| Definitions..... | 20 |
| Summary..... | 21 |
| CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW..... | 23 |
| Overview..... | 23 |
| Theoretical Framework..... | 23 |
| Cognitive Development | 23 |
| Moral Development | 27 |
| Faith and Spiritual Development | 32 |

| | |
|--|----|
| Related Literature..... | 40 |
| Student-Teacher Perceptions | 40 |
| Teaching Methods and Curriculum | 45 |
| Prior Knowledge and Learning..... | 51 |
| Worldview Identity | 55 |
| Summary..... | 59 |
| CHAPTER THREE: METHODS..... | 61 |
| Overview..... | 61 |
| Design..... | 61 |
| Research Questions..... | 62 |
| Setting..... | 63 |
| Participants..... | 65 |
| Procedures..... | 67 |
| The Researcher’s Role | 69 |
| Data Collection | 70 |
| Interviews..... | 72 |
| Journaling..... | 76 |
| Focus Groups | 78 |
| Data Analysis..... | 80 |
| Trustworthiness..... | 84 |
| Credibility | 85 |
| Dependability and Confirmability | 85 |
| Transferability..... | 86 |

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| Ethical Considerations | 86 |
| Summary | 88 |
| CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS | 89 |
| Overview | 89 |
| Participants | 89 |
| Min-jun | 90 |
| Airi | 91 |
| Sara | 92 |
| Joo-won | 93 |
| Karen | 94 |
| Linda | 95 |
| Results | 96 |
| Theme Identification | 96 |
| Research Question Results | 124 |
| Summary | 133 |
| CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION | 135 |
| Overview | 135 |
| Summary of Findings | 135 |
| Research Questions | 136 |
| Discussion | 139 |
| Theoretical Findings | 139 |
| Empirical Findings | 146 |
| Implications | 155 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Theoretical | 155 |
| Empirical..... | 157 |
| Practical..... | 159 |
| Delimitations and Limitations..... | 162 |
| Recommendations for Future Research | 164 |
| Summary | 166 |
| REFERENCES | 168 |
| APPENDICES | 186 |
| Appendix A: Participant Identification Survey..... | 186 |
| Appendix B: Student Interview Questions | 188 |
| Appendix C: Journal Entry Guidelines and Questions | 189 |
| Appendix D: Focus Group Guided Questions | 190 |
| Appendix E: Parental & Child Combined Consent Form..... | 192 |
| Appendix F: Superintendent Letter of Invitation to Participate..... | 195 |
| Appendix G: Head Principal Letter of Invitation | 196 |
| Appendix H: IRB Approval Letter | 197 |
| Appendix I: Recruitment Email | 198 |
| Appendix J: Student Recruitment Follow Up Email | 199 |
| Appendix K: Bracketing Out Bias | 200 |

List of Tables

| | |
|---------------|----|
| Table 1 | 65 |
| Table 2 | 90 |
| Table 3 | 98 |
| Table 4 | 99 |

List of Abbreviations

Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI)

Computer Assisted Qualitative Database Analysis Software (CAQDAS)

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD)

East Asia Regional Council for Schools (EARCOS)

English Language Learners (ELL)

Faith Development Theory (FDT)

Sky International School (SIS)

Third Culture Kid (TCK)

Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Numerous studies have focused on the areas of spiritual, religious, faith, and moral development among teenagers in a variety of settings, such as churches, secular and religious universities, or the home, but not in overseas Christian international schools (Burton, Paroschi, Habenicht, & Hollingsead, 2006; Cochran, 2012; King & Boyatzis, 2004; Paredes-Collins, 2013). Research has been and continues to be conducted on best educational practices in the classroom setting, specifically on best pedagogical approaches, such as differentiation, instructional methods, second language learners, or multicultural education (Dozier, 2012; Lauria, 2010; Luster, 2011; Skerrett, 2014), but seldom on best practices to deliver a Bible curriculum within a Christian international school academic setting.

Therefore, to address the challenges of delivering a Bible curriculum to a diverse student population, an examination of the perceptions of students enrolled in the Bible courses should be undertaken. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to seek to provide a deeper and more thorough understanding of grade 12 international school students' perceptions of (a) the Bible curriculum and (b) the teachers' instructional methodology of the Bible curriculum at an open enrollment Christian international school within Asia. This chapter will present background for this problem that necessitates further exploration of this topic, as well as an explanation of the research problem and purpose. Finally, this chapter will introduce the research questions that guided this study and concludes with an overview of literature upon which the research is founded.

Background

Christian school education has been in existence for centuries and can be traced back to the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem (Kienel, 1998). Over the past two hundred years, overseas Christian international schools developed to partner with missionary families to educate their children (Boerema, 2011). Today, most of these Christian international schools are associated with several Christian school organizations that provide accreditation, certification, and other services for K-12 schools around the world. For this research, only Christian international schools associated with the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) was used. Today, ACSI supports over 200 international schools, 1,600 global national schools, and 2,900 United States member schools (ACSI 2014 Annual Report, 2014). Though many of these schools were first established to support missionary families, today they serve a broader population in the city or region where they are located.

Overseas Christian international schools openly enroll students from a variety of religious backgrounds and many require students to take Bible classes daily and attend chapel weekly. The wide range of language ability and diverse religious beliefs of students in these unique settings creates a distinct classroom setting that often requires teachers to utilize a variety of best teaching practices. It also requires teachers to deliver content to a classroom of students with an assorted and sometimes conflicting range of prior knowledge of the Bible. This prior knowledge may range from never having heard of Jesus Christ, to being raised in a Christian home and not believing, finally to those whose beliefs cause them to live their faith daily. Therefore, within the Christian international school settings, a Bible teacher must develop practices that go beyond standard educational practices to meet the needs of students' cognitive, religious, spiritual, faith, and moral development.

When Christian international schools openly enroll students from various backgrounds, no statement of faith is required; however, students are required to take Bible courses in accordance with the curriculum and participate in weekly assemblies. In this setting teachers face issues similar to other schools around the world with second language learners, third culture kids (TCK's), multicultural education, and the use of differentiation and best teaching practices (Blue, 2011; De Nooij & Riedel, 2010; Moore & Barker, 2012). Yet, in Christian international schools, these students who come from various religious backgrounds are required to take Bible courses causing Bible teachers the added dimension of teaching a standard Bible curriculum to students with very diverse faith backgrounds. Therefore, Bible teachers at Christian international schools face the challenges of regular core content teachers, but they also have to address content in a classroom setting with students whose prior knowledge ranges from never hearing of Jesus Christ, to growing up hearing and not believing, to students who might believe and live out their faith daily. There is ample research on the role of Christian education in spiritual, moral, faith, and religious development on students who are professing Christians within the United States, but little to no research regarding non-religious students enrolled in Christian schools (Layton, Dollahite, & Hardy, 2011; Layton, Hardy, & Dollahite, 2012; Long, 2014). Since Christian international schools allow non-Christian student enrollment, a compelling question arises concerning the impact a Bible curriculum has on those students who come from a variety of religious backgrounds and receive the same content within the Bible class setting. It also raises the question of whether it is just the course material, or the actual pedagogical delivery of the Bible curriculum that impacts students. In other words, how does a Bible curriculum and a teacher's best practices impact the perceptions and understanding of students at an international Christian school in Asia? Such an overarching question requires further investigation of these

students and Bible teachers within the context of this setting to understand the effectiveness of current Bible curriculum and its delivery and the implications for future Bible curricula in Christian international schools.

Situation to Self

I am an evangelical Christian and will approach this study from a Biblical worldview. I believe that there is an absolute truth and that the Holy Spirit is ultimately the one responsible for the transformation of hearts, though I am still commanded to share the gospel with others. Within the context of a Christian international school, this often takes place through the process of Biblical integration throughout the curriculum, as well as in the required systematic and comprehensive Bible curriculum from K-12.

My experience as a classroom teacher and administrator in a Christian international school provides me with different insights into the development of curriculum necessary to meet the unique needs of this diverse student population. Through the interaction with a variety of students, parents, and Bible teachers, I have experienced first-hand both the positive features, as well as the frustrations, of teaching a Bible curriculum within the international Christian school setting. I have a strong desire to utilize the results from this study to further investigate the possibility of a revised international Christian school Bible curriculum that more effectively addresses the problem of international Christian school students in the current traditional Bible curriculum.

Problem Statement

The problem is that there is a lack of evidence of student perceptions of the impact of required Bible courses in overseas Christian international schools from both the Bible curriculum and the method for which it is delivered in the classroom. Research documents Christian

universities' pedagogical practices that best integrates faith, learning, and educational methods for students in university classes (Burton & Nwosu, 2003), as well as church Sunday school curriculum and teaching methods for primary and middle grades (Burton et al., 2006; Reck, 2012). Research has also been conducted at various levels of education on student-teacher relationships (P. Liu, 2013; S. Liu & Meng, 2009) and student perceptions of teachers (Hagay & Baram-Tsabari, 2015; McHugh, Horner, Colditz, & Wallace, 2012), student identity development (Moore & Barker, 2012; Rich & Schachter, 2012), classroom management and learning environments (Dozier, 2012; Hattie, 2009; Lemley, Schumacher, & Vesey, 2014), but there still exists a gap in research that explores Christian international schools' Bible curriculum and their approach to delivering that Bible curriculum in an academic and religiously diverse setting.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate grade 12 students' perceptions of the impact of a Bible curriculum and the teachers' instructional delivery of that Bible curriculum on grade 12 international school students at an open enrollment Christian international school in Asia. The theories guiding this study were Kohlberg's moral development, Fowler's faith development, and Piaget's cognitive development theories (Fowler, 1991, 2001; Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977; Piaget, 1972). During this research, teachers' delivery is generally defined as teaching methods used within the classroom to engage students with the curriculum. Student perceptions is generally defined as a student's interpretation or view of the subject matter and teacher delivery.

Significance of the Study

Teacher effectiveness as a factor in student academic achievement is clearly documented in literature from both a student perspective and a teacher perspective (Beausaert, Segers, & Wiltink, 2013; Hattie, 2009; Klassen & Tze, 2014; Lemley et al., 2014). The development of morals, faith, or religion are addressed either at the university level, church setting, or a non-Christian religious environment (Cohen-Malayev, Schachter, & Rich, 2014; Layton, Hardy, & Dollahite, 2012; McMurdie, Dollahite, & Hardy, 2013). Literature also has documented a variety of teaching methodologies or differentiation that is needed to meet the needs of all students: special needs, culturally and linguistically diverse, and second language learners (Abrami et al., 2015; Berg, Petron, & Greybeck, 2012; Berg & Huang, 2015; Blue, 2011; Bullock et al., 2014; Hogan & Hathcote, 2014). Additionally, previous research has been conducted on the influence of prior knowledge needed to assimilate and accommodate new information (Hattie, 2009; van Kesteren, Rijpkema, Ruiters, Morris, & Fernández, 2014; Williams & Lombrozo, 2013). While there is documented research on Biblical knowledge, it has been conducted primarily utilizing adolescents who attend church, seminary students, university students, or at closed enrollment Christian schools in the United States (Cohen-Malayev et al., 2014; Mayhew, Bowman, & Rockenbach, 2014; Stack-Nelson, 2014; Vaden & Woolley, 2011). The current research clearly identifies practical educational practices at all levels of education, but also shines light on the need for further research within Christian international schools.

This qualitative study is an opportunity to add to the literature on current pedagogical practices in the context of delivering a Bible curriculum and development of Bible curriculum in Christian international schools. Previous research on faith and spiritual development has taken place in university or church environments (Astin, Astin, & Lindholm, 2011; Harris & Leak,

2013; Paredes-Collins, 2013; Paredes-Collins & Collins, 2011; Yocum, 2014), but inquiries and research is lacking in secondary high school settings. Understanding the impact of a Bible curriculum on the outcomes of students enrolled in Christian international schools may affect the moral and social development of the individual and society at large (Kohlberg & Power, 1981; Vermeer, 2010). Understanding student perceptions of the way the Bible curriculum is presented in the classroom could further add to high school Bible teachers' pedagogical practices.

International Christian schools are not solely for students who have a faith or belief in Christ, but are open to students from any religious background. Although diversity of religion is represented within the school, the mission and purpose of the school is still centered on education and spreading the Gospel in accordance with the mandate stated in Matthew 28:19-20. These schools typically require all students to take Bible courses and attend weekly assemblies; however, participation in such classes does not always appear to impact the religious, spiritual, or moral development of students (Cohen-Malayev et al., 2014; Layton et al., 2011; McMurdie et al., 2013). If evangelism and discipleship are aspects of the Bible curriculum, there is a need to further explore students' perceptions of the Bible curriculum, teachers' instructional methods delivering the curriculum, and the understanding of Christianity within this environment (Freatly & Aylward, 2010; McHugh et al., 2012; Rich & Schachter, 2012).

In addition, this study may contribute to the gap in literature in Bible curriculum development for Christian international schools. Christian international schools may be able to better meet the needs of students if there is greater understanding of current perceptions of Bible curriculum offered, as well as a better understanding of teachers' instructional methodology. This information would be influential in also fulfilling the Biblical mandate to spread the Gospel

to all nations. Most importantly, this study may have eternal significance for those individuals enrolled in Christian international schools around the world.

Research Questions

This study revolved around a central question that explored the impact a Bible curriculum has on students' moral and faith development, as well as the impact a teacher's instructional delivery of a Bible curriculum has on students at an open enrollment Christian international school in Asia. The central question was: How does the students' perception of both the content of a Bible curriculum and the teachers' instructional delivery of that Bible curriculum affect students at an open enrollment Christian international school in Asia? To answer the central question, the following sub-questions helped guide the research:

1. How does grade 12 international school students' prior knowledge of the Bible or Christianity impact their perceptions of a Christian international school's Bible curriculum?

Preconceived perceptions of courses may impact a student's view of the content being taught (Pruitt, Dicks, & Tilley, 2010). Not only does a student's perception of the content impact learning, but prior knowledge influences a student's ability to assimilate or accommodate new content (Gurlitt & Renkl, 2010; Rupley & Slough, 2010; Yeh et al., 2012).

2. How do the high school Bible classes at a Christian international school impact the perceived moral, faith, and worldview development of grade 12 international school students?

A student's cognitive, moral and faith development are influenced and impacted by teachers, peers, and parents (Brimi, 2009; Carpendale, 2000; Feldman, 2004). Since other outside

influences impact a student's moral and faith development, what is the impact of a Bible curriculum and Bible class in that developmental process from the student's perception?

3. How does a Christian international school teacher's instructional delivery method in a Bible class impact grade 12 international school students' perceptions of the Bible curriculum, and their moral, faith, or worldview development?

Creative and engaging instructional practices can influence a student's perceptions of the content material and impact the short and long-term memory of content materials (Brooks & Thurston, 2010; Burton & Nwosu, 2003; Burton et al., 2006; Kirschner, Sweller, & Clark, 2006). If teachers vary their teaching practices and engage students with practical application of the content material, does it impact student perception of the content (Burton & Nwosu, 2003)?

4. How does an international school students' family background impact their perceptions of the Bible curriculum and their moral, faith, or worldview development?

Parents play an important role in a child's education, as well as in the faith and moral development of their children (McMurdie et al., 2013). Research has shown that parents are a factor in the religious socialization of their children (Cohen-Malayev et al., 2014). Parents intentionally select to enroll their children in Christian international schools, regardless of the religious nature of the school as they are looking for academic quality and location of the school. If the home environment of the student is focused on academics, will a student's perceptions of the Bible curriculum be impacted?

Definitions

The following are pertinent terms defined that will be used throughout this research.

1. *Christian international schools*- Schools that are located outside of the United States and serve an expatriate student population who are residing overseas. The curriculum used is often from outside of the host country, based on a Western approach to education. The language of instruction is predominately in English (Association of Christian Schools International, 2015).
2. *Faith development*- “Process by which we shape our worldviews and form the convictions and values that anchor them” (Fowler, 1991, p. 27). For this study, spiritual development will be included in faith development.
3. *Moral development*- Individuals’ internal development of rules for what is right and wrong (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977; Schuitema, Dam, & Veugelers, 2008).
4. *Open enrollment*- Christian schools that enroll all students regardless of a differing personal belief than the school. Students and parents do not have to be Christians to attend the school, nor do they sign a statement of faith. Students are not permitted to opt out of the required Bible courses or the weekly assemblies.
5. *Worldview*- “Beliefs and values that inform both private and public thoughts and actions” (Valk, 2012, p. 160). For this study worldview is considered to impact all areas of a student’s life and helps a student identify how a personal worldview is part of that identity and who that student is.

Summary

International Christian schools serve a diverse student body population with the goal of providing a solid education, but more importantly, they provide an opportunity to evangelize and disciple its constituents. Teachers need to implement best teaching practices to meet the needs of the students academically or in language development (Berg et al., 2012; Bullock et al., 2014;

Hogan & Hathcote, 2014). Bible teachers are further challenged to differentiate teaching based on individual student faith development or beliefs and prior knowledge of Christianity (McMurdie et al., 2013; Vaden & Woolley, 2011). Research suggests there are benefits of differentiated teaching practices in most academic disciplines, but there is little research on best instructional practices in teaching a Bible curriculum in an open enrollment international Christian school (Meidl & Meidl, 2011; Wilson, 2012). Most prior research has focused on students' faith or spiritual development in United States Christian schools (Layton et al., 2011, 2012), where students sign a statement of faith, or are already in a university setting (Paredes-Collins, 2014). Minimal research has been conducted in international Christian high schools that have an open enrollment policy and allows the attendance of students from any religious background. There exists a gap in curriculum development and teaching methods of Bible curriculum at Christian international schools.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

In the world of education there is always discussion of best teaching practices and the various methods of student learning. Within a Christian school setting there is also the practice of Biblical integration in all content areas. Teaching Bible in a school classroom setting is no different than other subjects in that the teacher needs to utilize various instructional methods to engage students in the classroom material. There is a further need for Bible teachers and the courses to meet the personal development of faith and spirituality needs of all students. This chapter will discuss the theoretical frameworks of cognitive development, moral development, and faith and spiritual development theories that form the foundation of this research project. The theoretical discussion will be followed by a discussion of student perceptions of instructional strategies and curriculum development, as well as prior knowledge related to a Biblical worldview and identity development.

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical or conceptual framework is considered the foundation and primary focus for which the literature review has been constructed (Merriam, 1998). This framework can be considered a lens from which the researcher has constructed the research questions and identifies the disciplinary orientation the researcher will use to situate the study (Merriam, 1998). The theoretical framework and literature review help to frame the study and identify gaps in literature and the need for further study in the stated purpose of the study.

Cognitive Development

Human development of intelligence is often associated with Piaget's cognitive development stages from infancy to adulthood (Bruner, 1960; Cartwright, 2001; Flavell, 1971,

1992; Fortosis & Garland, 1990; Piaget, 1972). Piaget conducted studies with children to identify four phases of cognitive development at various stages of life: sensorimotor, pre-operational, concrete operational, and formal operational (Feldman, 2004; Miller, 2011). Throughout each of these stages key concepts were also identified that were associated with any age or stage range: assimilation, accommodation, equilibration, and schemas (Flavell, 1971; Fortosis & Garland, 1990; Miller, 2011). Yet through all of the research studies conducted by Piaget, the developmental stages do not take into consideration the influence of culture, socioeconomic status, or gender of an individual (Bruner, 1960, 1996; Case, Hayward, Lewis, & Hurst, 1988; Flavell, 1992; Gilligan, 1980).

When first considering Piaget's cognitive theory, there is foundational basis for his developmental stages, but in recent research there continues to be further discoveries and adaptations of his original premise and stages (Feldman, 2004; Flavell, 1992). Neo-Piagetians have further developed upon the original Piaget theory in the area of adulthood cognitive development and further defined the stages of development in the individual (Cartwright, 2001; Case et al., 1988). The Neo-Piagetian theorists also take into consideration individual differences and the belief that cognitive development is not linear, nor does it always occur in the age ranges originally identified by Piaget (Bruner, 1960; Feldman, 2004; Flavell, 1992). "Core assumptions of classical Piagetian theory have been preserved" (Case et al., 1988, p. 2), even though new cognitive theories have developed in the past fifty years.

As new theories have developed there is still the underlying foundation of Piagetian theory when considering curriculum development (Case et al., 1988; Flavell, 1992). The development of a vertically articulated curriculum is often done using the basic theory of cognitive development as a guide for intelligence development (Brainerd, 1978). If educators

rely solely on the use of cognitive development to develop curriculum, then there are “specific prescriptions and proscriptions when it comes to teaching children” (Brainerd, 1978, p. 37) and there is disregard for content or other factors in the development of an appropriate curriculum. Piaget stated that “teaching children concepts that they have not acquired in their spontaneous development...is completely useless” (as cited by Brainerd, 1978, p. 39). When using cognitive development as the only theory for curriculum development and instructional practices, there are three areas with which cognitive development is utilized: (a) sequencing of curriculum, (b) content of curriculum, and (c) teaching methodology (Brainerd, 1978). If cognitive development is the only theory considered in development of curriculum, instructional practices, and assessment, then mastery of content is not the objective for classroom teachers, but rather speeding up student progress that may hinder appropriate development in a natural manner (Brainerd, 1978). This implies that teachers cannot assume that all students are at the same stage of cognitive development, nor are children to be taught concepts that exceed the natural developmental stage for each individual. Teachers must address each individual student and identify the individual’s stage of development in order to appropriately help the student learn concepts that are cognitively appropriate (Brainerd, 1978; Cartwright, 2001; Denney, 1984). There is an underlying implication in education that teacher delivery, instructional practices, differentiation, curriculum development, and assessment should all be based on the idea of cognitive development (Brainerd, 1978; Flavell, 1971; Orr, 1991). If children do develop according to Piaget’s stages, then educational practices should be developed in a way to align with the intellectual developmental theory.

One must consider the idea of prior knowledge being an aspect of intellectual development that could also impact a child’s understanding of new material. Cognitive

development theory implies that students will add to prior knowledge and, therefore, in adding new knowledge to previous knowledge, create a whole new understanding of the content or skill learned (Bruner, 1986; Gurlitt & Renkl, 2010; van Kesteren et al., 2014). Putting new information into a preexisting framework allows for assimilation to take place. Assimilation allows for a balance of meaning for students, but it is when students are at disequilibrium that learning takes place (Fortosis & Garland, 1990). Disequilibrium is when new information contradicts the reality or preexisting framework of a child's former understanding (Fortosis & Garland, 1990). According to Fortosis and Garland (1990) this idea of disequilibria is where Christian educators want to be, just as the Bible creates tension and challenges adolescents' reality. This disequilibrium will not only challenge the intellectual reality that adolescents have created, but it will bring forth challenges to the moral and faith development of students (Fortosis & Garland, 1990). Even if a student comes from a strong personal faith they will encounter challenges in their life that will create this disequilibrium, which will force them to think about what they believe and why (Biniecki & Conceição, 2014). This should not mean that a Bible teacher should inflict pain and suffering on any student to get to this point, but to challenge them to think at a deeper level that further deepens their faith through the concept of disequilibria (Blasi, 1983; Flavell, 1982).

The idea that humans navigate from objective to subjective processes would impact a student's development of faith, religion or epistemic belief (Cartwright, 2001; Fortosis & Garland, 1990; Gottlieb, 2007; Love, 2002). Gottlieb (2007) found in research that "epistemic development was characterized as a progression through discrete stages" (p. 6). This idea is similar with Piaget and the neo-Piagetian belief that cognitive development is a linear process. Yet through further investigation, Gottlieb (2007) found that epistemological development might

need to be reexamined as beliefs may be impacted by knowledge, but there are other factors that impact adolescent beliefs as well.

The basic foundation of Piaget's stages of cognitive development has helped inform the ideas of moral, spiritual, religious and faith development practices (Carpendale, 2000; Fortosis & Garland, 1990). It begs to consider the spiritual development alongside of cognitive development and, if Piaget believed that in early infancy cognitive development was occurring, why then could not spiritual, moral, or faith development also begin to occur?

Moral Development

Moral development was first identified by Piaget in the early 1930's through studies of children and their respect for rules and concepts of right and wrong, but was further refined by Kohlberg (Carpendale, 2000; Gibbs, Basinger, Grime, & Snarey, 2007; Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977). Moral development theory is the process or stages that individuals go through over time to develop values, moral order, or right and wrong (Carpendale, 2000; Kohlberg & Power, 1981). Both Piaget and Kohlberg believed morality was more than just passing it down from one generation to the next; however, "the aspect of morality that goes beyond mere conformity to traditional rules must be constructed by individuals" (Carpendale, 2000, p. 182). Moral and cognitive development theories intertwine as both were developed using a schemata to construct general stages, while Kohlberg originally utilized Piaget's cognitive development stages to identify his moral development stages (Carpendale, 2000; Gibbs et al., 2007; Kohlberg, 2008; Kohlberg & Gilligan, 1971; Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977). Within the moral development theory are three levels: pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional, autonomous, or principled level (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977). Each of the three levels holds two stages of moral development

and ultimately all the stages go from the idea of basic obedience to universal-ethical-principle orientation.

Kohlberg made direct comparisons of Piaget's theory of cognitive development with the first two stages of moral development theory through a longitudinal study that was conducted with boys of three age groups: 10, 13, and 16 in suburban Chicago (Gibbs et al., 2007; Kohlberg, 2008). Kohlberg (2008) further developed the moral stages, based on the initial work of Piaget, "with a group of 24 delinquents aged 16, a group of 24 six-year olds, and a group of 50 boys and girls aged 12 residing outside of Boston" (p. 9). The results of these studies allowed for significant comparison of the two theories, moral and cognitive development theory, and placed order and structure to the theories. Kohlberg argues the parallels between the two developmental theories exist and may need to be further researched and developed (Carpendale, 2000; Kohlberg, 2008). There is also the understanding that as cognitive growth occurs, a child's moral standards are transformed due to an increase in knowledge (Blasi, 1983; Kohlberg, 2008). As a person goes through the stages of moral development, Kohlberg and Gilligan (1971) identify that "all movements are forward in sequence and [do] not skip steps" (p. 1068). As humans progress through the stages they cannot skip a step or stage without going through the previous stages (Kohlberg & Gilligan, 1971). According to Kohlberg and Gilligan (1971), a person cannot enter into Stage 6, the postconventional stage, if they have not gone through the conventional, Stages 4-5, but if one is in Stage 4 they have already gone through the preconventional Stages 1-3. Though it is sequential, there is also the understanding that movement through stages is done at the individual pace of a child and they may stop at any stage in the process (Kohlberg & Gilligan, 1971). If a child does not continue forward in cognitive development, does that imply moral development has also stopped?

Though there is the assumption that progressing through stages in cognitive development also impacts a person's moral development, Brown and Annis (1978) found that frequency of attending church, Sunday school, or other religious settings did not equate to moral development in individuals. It is assumed that a person would gain further knowledge in Biblical literacy or on religious matters when attending a religious function. Their study, however, found that the frequency of religious attendance and prayer did not necessarily develop morals, but there was a significant correlation between a "subject's morality and literal scriptural belief" (Brown & Annis, 1978, p. 1230).

A longitudinal study that was conducted on Christian university and college campuses identified that values and beliefs among students showed continual development of moral reasoning (Foster & LaForce, 1999). Though there was continual development of morals and values amongst university students, Christian university student values did not vary significantly from the freshmen to senior year. During the four years at a Christian university, students had less significant changes in personal values, but the values students held were significantly different than the values held by students who attended secular institutions (Foster & LaForce, 1999). Foster and LaForce (1999) also found that those students who persisted in four years of Christian university setting developed a "reduction in extrinsic religiosity" (p. 64), but also "found no increase in intrinsic religiosity" (p. 64). Intrinsic religiosity is considered an internal belief or "embracing one's religious beliefs and trying to live one's religion" (Foster & LaForce, 1999, p. 64). Extrinsic religiosity is considered a religion to meet one's needs, focus on the self, or "to shape doctrine to meet their needs, rather than to be shaped by it" (Foster & LaForce, 1999, p. 64) The students who left a Christian university for a secular institution showed greater development in intrinsic religiosity and a decrease in extrinsic religiosity (Foster & LaForce,

1999). It can be assumed that, similar to Piaget and Kohlberg's original developmental concepts, these students are faced with an experience or crisis that helps them form a more developed intrinsic religiosity, or a disequilibria (Bryant & Astin, 2008; Fortosis & Garland, 1990). This is one example of many research studies on religious, moral, or spiritual development among university students with similar results, but very few, if any, studies have been conducted in a Christian high school setting (Foster & LaForce, 1999). Whether a student goes to a secular or Christian university, there appears to be no significant difference or gain by being enrolled in one institution over another in the development of moral reasoning (Foster & LaForce, 1999). There does appear to be a difference in the intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity of these students (Fortosis & Garland, 1990; Foster & LaForce, 1999; Yocum, 2014). This brings forth the question as to whether the same would hold true for adolescents at Christian and non-Christian high schools. Would adolescents who experience a higher degree of disequilibration or change from a secular to a religious education setting show a significant difference in intrinsic and extrinsic beliefs?

Kohlberg's moral development theory is often confused or identified with religious development, spiritual development, faith development, and moral behavior practices. Kohlberg and Power (1981) believed that "there are clear parallels between our moral stages and a stagelike development of religious thinking" (p. 255). These similarities are a cause for concern for many in public education as it is difficult to provide moral education in schools independent of religion (Kohlberg & Power, 1981). Kohlberg and Power (1981) also suggest that the development of religious identity theory rests upon and is parallel to the development of moral reasoning. Though there is a parallelism, Kohlberg and Power (1981) believe that religious and moral development are separable and that lower stages of moral development can be addressed without religious thinking.

Throughout Kohlberg's study and development of the moral stages theory there is an underlying assumption and understanding that "the relationship between moral judgment and moral behavior is not fully defined" (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977, p. 58). There is also the understanding that an internal change must occur for an outward behavioral change to take place consistently. One cannot assume that an outward behavior of doing right is based on moral judgment or cognition, but must also consider the desire of children to need approval, fit in, or adapt to a situation (Blasi, 1983; Kohlberg & Gilligan, 1971). Court (2010) stated the "intellectual discipline of learning is part of moral training" (p. 501). Modeling from adults helps children to develop moral traits. Adults have a developed and clear understanding of what is desired for a moral life, but children and adolescents are still in the process of developing and learning those lessons (Court, 2010; Gibbs et al., 2007). According to Court (2010), "a young child learns behaviors, values and traditions, absorbs culture and beliefs, and gradually forms his or her own relationship with this set of norms" (p. 492). Therefore, actions and modeling of lessons are essential for them to see in order to learn and make a connection with the words or language being used to express the moral traits being taught (Court, 2010). Modeling of desired morals is a significant aspect of the classroom environment, but it is also important to put words with the modeling (Denney, 1984). Modeling alone will not always bring about moral results, but lessons that allow students to listen, express, reflect, and make a decision will aid them in learning morals (Court, 2010; Rosenberg, 2011).

Within the moral development theory, Kohlberg believed that these stages were universally cross-cultural in nature (Bar-Yam et al., 1980; Gibbs et al., 2007). Kohlberg believed that moral development was cross-cultural, and research has suggested that cultural background, socio-economic status, gender, and education level do impact moral reasoning (Bar-Yam et al.,

1980; Gibbs et al., 2007; Gilligan, 1980). Therefore, in an international school or a Christian educational setting, it is important to take into consideration a child's educational background when considering the advancement of moral reasoning. If one continues to express stories, ethics, religion, or values from a predetermined cultural background or an expectation of prior knowledge of the material, consideration is needed for differentiated practices (Gay, 2013; Gibbs et al., 2007; Kohlberg, 2008). Such practices in an international Bible class would need to range from language development, prior knowledge, spiritual development, and Biblical literacy. Consequently, Christian international schools should consider the moral, religious, spiritual, and cognitive educational development in light of the various cultural backgrounds represented in each classroom setting.

Faith and Spiritual Development

It is often assumed that religion, faith, belief, and spirituality are synonymous, but religion is more often defined separately as a social institution that involves rituals and traditions (Craft & Rockenbach, 2011; Gottlieb, 2006; Love, 2002; Parks, 2011; Yocum, 2014). Research does show that, although different definitions may be utilized for each of these terms, they all interconnect so that one can be considered religious and participate in traditions, yet not be spiritual or vice versa (Craft & Rockenbach, 2011; Yocum, 2014). Religious development is often an outward expression within a societal institution that may reflect a moral, spiritual, or faith decision of individuals in that society. King and Boyatzis (2004) state that "spirituality and religion are central dimensions of human experience" (p. 2), but one can be religious without being spiritual or holding an internal faith.

The religious development of an adolescent is often associated with the influence of parents, peers, and religious education, all of which are an external observation of religion by the

adolescent (De Roos, 2006; Elkind, 1964; Erickson, 1992; Love, 2002; Potvin & Lee, 1982). Even though religious development occurs from infancy through adulthood, it implies an internal religious belief system or what some consider a faith or spiritual development (Astin et al., 2011; King & Boyatzis, 2004; Potvin & Lee, 1982). An outward religious expression does not always reflect an internal faith or spiritual formation. There are also aspects of spirituality, such as intuition, connectedness, and creativity that cannot be thoroughly defined (Astin et al., 2011). Therefore, spirituality, or faith development, is belief, values, or an individual's sense of purpose or meaning in life (Astin et al., 2011; Craft & Rockenbach, 2011; Fowler & Dell, 2004; Parks, 2011). An individual's faith can and should be expressed outwardly, often in a religious context. Spirituality and faith development can also be defined as separate concepts, but for this research they will be considered synonymous.

Fowler utilized the works of Dewey, Piaget, and Kohlberg to develop his faith development theory (FDT) (Fowler & Dell, 2004; Fowler, 1991; Roehlkepartain, King, Wagener, & Benson, 2006). Using both cognitive and moral development theory as a framework, Fowler identified seven stage-like processes or stages of faith consciousness that include primal faith, intuitive-projective faith, mythic-literal faith, synthetic-conventional faith, individuative-reflective faith, conjunctive faith, and universalizing faith (Fowler & Dell, 2004; Fowler, 1991; Love, 2002; Roehlkepartain et al., 2006). FDT is not religious faith, as Fowler (1991) states, "one can have faith that is not religious faith" (p. 31). Fowler also believed that faith was in existence even before a child is aware of religious faith (in the primal faith stage), but once exposed to religion, the religious faith is an added dimension (Fowler & Dell, 2004). Throughout the development of his FDT, the central question was how the concept and influence

of God impacts “core values, beliefs, and meanings in their personal lives and in their relationship with others” (Roehlkepartain et al., 2006, p. 34).

According to Fowler (1991), during the elementary years, children develop mythic-literal faith, which coincides with the concrete-operational thinking stage. During this period of development individuals begin to identify differences between reality and make-believe or fantasy. This stage of development often begins at middle childhood and can go beyond into adulthood (Fowler, 1991; Love, 2002; Parks, 1982). It is not until adolescence that children enter the synthetic-conventional faith development stage and this stage may last an entire life span, depending on the individual (Fowler, 1991; Love, 2002; Parks, 1982, 2011). At this time in life children begin to operate in a formal operations stage, which allows them to begin to cognitively think abstractly, symbolically, and from a third-person perspective (Parks, 2011). The synthetic-conventional faith stage is a time where individuals are shaped by relationships, responsibilities, concern about a personal identity, and the future (Fowler, 1991). The identity that is formed during the synthetic-conventional stage is one that revolves around a job, responsibility, or relationships and other external factors. This stage during adolescence is similar to the moral and religious development of individuals where the need to fit in and be influenced by relationships and social institutions are important at this time in life (Love, 2002). Fowler believes that one does not move from this stage until at least after age 17 and may continue in the stage for an undetermined amount of time during their life (Fowler, 1991; Parks, 2011). According to Fowler’s FDT it would not be until after age 17 that individuals enter the individuative-reflective stage. In this stage the “individual is able to reflect on one’s own existence and process of development and begins to self-define and to self-construct roles and relationships” (Love, 2002, p. 361). The individuative-reflective stage may not begin until after age 17 and last into mid-life,

but this is the time period where individuals take responsibility for a personal faith. Parks (1982) believes that during this stage, there is what she calls a “movement from tacit to explicit knowledge and from ‘outside’ to ‘inner’ authority” (p. 659). When considering the development of Bible curriculum and worldview identity, Christian schools often ask students to be reflective in thinking and beliefs. Therefore, according to Fowler’s FDT, students might be in a stage where they are not developmentally ready to take responsibility for their own faith. The final two stages of FDT are called conjunctive and universalizing, both of which occur midlife or beyond. It is at the conjunctive stage where individuals approach truth from various perspectives and “make sense out of paradoxes” (Fowler & Dell, 2004, p. 24). The pinnacle or the ultimate stage of faith, universalizing, is when the individual has the boldness to live out their conviction making others around them uncomfortable. Fowler and Dell (2004) stated, “relatively few individuals achieve this level of vision and faith-related action” (p. 24). Examples of “those very exceptional figures that most people would agree have reached (or did reach) the universalizing stage are Mohandas Ghandhi, Mother Theresa, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr and, perhaps former United States President Jimmy Carter” (Fowler & Dell, 2004, p. 25).

Fowler’s FDT was later expanded upon to include an added stage by Parks (1982) called a young adult stage, a stage between Fowler’s synthetic-conventional faith and individuative-reflective faith stages. Through Parks experience with college students, she discovered that university seniors tended to move between the synthetic-conventional and individuative-reflective faith stages and continued there until their thirties, without fully moving into the individuative-reflective stage of faith development (Parks, 1982, 2011). However, with the addition of this young adulthood stage, she essentially extended the faith development time span between adolescence and adulthood allowing an individual to develop from an exploration or

probing commitment to a tested commitment of faith (Parks, 1982, 2011). Even with the addition of a young adulthood stage, the major faith development focus is after the age of 17 or post-high school. When considering both Fowler and Park's FDT stages, adolescents, or more specifically high school students, are in a time of "great ambiguity and uncertainty... in their journey of spiritual development" (Love, 2002, p. 362). During such an ambiguous time, there will generally be resistance to authority, yet at the same time what a teenager knows of faith or spirituality "is grounded in some form of authority that exists outside of oneself" (Love, 2002, p. 362). Adolescents begin to accommodate the idea that not everything is completely knowable. They are on the cusp of recognizing that they must make their own path, but they are still dependent upon parents or other authorities around them (Love, 2002).

FDT relies on "intuition, emotion, and imagination" (Fowler, 1991, p. 42) whereas cognitive or intellectual development relies on a more logical development. In Christian education it is important to understand cognitive, moral, and faith development as an integrated whole through instruction, curriculum selection and development, and human experience (Foster & LaForce, 1999; Fowler & Dell, 2004; Fowler, 1991; King & Boyatzis, 2004; Zimmerman, 1982). Although Fowler identified stages of consciousness and faith development, ultimately "most young people in adolescence progress from having tacit commitment to the views of important reference groups around them to possessing a more 'owned' and personalized faith, one that arises from critical introspection of one's beliefs and values" (King & Boyatzis, 2004, p.2). In a study conducted on Christian university and college campuses, students were not as Biblically or religiously literate as one would expect (Craft & Rockenbach, 2011). This falls in line with Parks' (2011) further extension of FDT that university students have an inherited faith that is not their personal individual faith or experience, but one that has come from family. An

inherited faith may explain the lack of Biblical or religious literacy among university-aged students. Certainly, Christian schools at all levels must consider Biblical literacy as an important feature of a curriculum. The knowledge of the material and differentiating between definitions of religion or faith is an important concept for not only Christian students to define, but any student or adult.

When contemplating the development of a person's religious, faith, or spiritual development, it is not difficult to make comparisons between moral and cognitive development. When examining the maturation of an individual and the faith of a child, there is a vast difference in the spiritual connection linking cognition and God. Court (2010) suggested that to get back to a child-like faith, our road "runs on three parallel and interweaving tracks that Religious Education should travel: the intellectual, the practical/moral, and the spiritual" (p. 502). Cognitive development trains and develops the mind; however, it is also this intellectual development that is an important aspect of acquiring religious knowledge and developing intellectual discipline. When individuals are developing intellectually, and when they combine that with prayer, they are further refining their moral understanding of themselves as individuals (Court, 2010). Students' cognitive development or intellectual development and the development of moral values is one way that theorists believe individuals make a spiritual connection with God, especially when combined with the disciplined studying of scripture (Court, 2010).

In Christian international schools, there is a need to balance the academic with the internal spiritual or faith development of the student. Many Christian international schools believe this happens because of the mandatory Bible courses (Astin et al., 2011; Potvin & Lee, 1982), but does it? Astin et al., (2011) found, that at the university level, the focus is more on external appearances such as grades, honors courses, or grade point average. Thus "they have

increasingly come to neglect the student's 'inner' development—the sphere of values and beliefs, emotional maturity, moral development, spirituality, and self-understanding” (Astin et al., 2011, p. 39). At a higher education level, administrators are discussing the need for additional spiritual and faith development practices in both secular and religious institutions (Astin, 2004; Paredes-Collins, 2009; Paredes-Collins & Collins, 2011), and character or moral education in secondary education (Nucci & Turiel, 2009; Rosenberg, 2011; Schuitema et al., 2008). If at the higher education level of both secular and religious institutions they are discussing ways in which to enhance spiritual development among students, it appears further investigation is needed to see if the same need exists in a high school setting. Parks (1982, 2011) expanded Fowler's FDT by adding the stage of young adulthood due to her experience with undergraduate and graduate university students. Indeed, Christian international schools desire for students to develop a personal faith and individual identity in Christ, but the FDT stage of development suggests these two ideals would occur after high school (Parks, 2011).

It is assumed that with cognitive development there is also an impact on the development of morals, but Brown and Annis (1978) found that attendance within a church or other religious setting does not equate to moral development in individuals. Their study found that frequency of attendance and prayer did not necessarily develop morals, but there was significant correlation between morals and scriptural belief (Brown & Annis, 1978). If Christian educators seek to help students develop spiritually, then “we must strive to help our students not to just memorize or learn pedantically, but to *engage* with scripture” (Court, 2010, p. 500). In a study conducted on college and university campuses, students struggled with defining and differentiating the difference between spirituality, religion, and faith (Craft & Rockenbach, 2011). These results may be due to the American culture in that, when someone discusses religion, it is translated as

faith or spirituality (Craft & Rockenbach, 2011). If college level students struggle to clearly define religious practices or beliefs or facets of religion, then it can be assumed that adolescent-aged students would struggle even more to clearly define the differences. Would this lack of clarity impact students' perception of the Bible as a content or curriculum subject?

The development of faith during adolescence is still dependent on authority figures such as parents, church, or the Christian school educators (Parks, 2011). And there is always the added desire of adolescents to fit into the group and not stand out in the crowd. Within a Christian school or religious education curriculum, there is a desire to push adolescents into a belief or development of faith that is believed to be beyond what is developmentally appropriate for an adolescent student (Parks, 1982, 2011).

When considering the development of curriculum, in any subject area, there is a constant reminder and bend toward the cognitive development of a student (Brainerd, 1978; Orr, 1991). The idea is that a predetermined amount of knowledge must be learned before the next level of learning can take place. If there is no foundation from which to build upon, it is difficult to teach new material or to push a child through the material to 'catch up' to the others in the class (Brainerd, 1978; Cartwright, 2001; Denney, 1984). The same idea has been compared with moral and spiritual development in adolescents as the process being linear and one cannot move into the next stage without having first experienced the previous stage of learning (Carpendale, 2000; Kohlberg & Gilligan, 1971). All of these theories agree that stages cannot be skipped and one cannot speed up the cognitive, moral, and spiritual development of an individual (Carpendale, 2000; Fowler, 2001; Kohlberg & Gilligan, 1971; Kohlberg & Power, 1981; Parks, 1982).

Yet within Christian schools, the Bible curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices tend to make assumptions of a child's prior knowledge, exposure, and cultural beliefs. There is a

desire to push students to understand some of the basic knowledge of the Biblical content, but it has been proven that curriculum and instructional practices should not try to speed up students through these stages of development or it could create negative consequences for student learning (Brainerd, 1978). When considering a Bible curriculum or teaching practices, the negative consequences of pushing students through material may cause student perceptions of the Bible, Christianity, religion, or spirituality to be misplaced or misinterpreted. Therefore, it is important to identify high school student perceptions and understanding of the Bible curriculum and teaching practices to further research appropriate practices and curriculum in this area.

Related Literature

Student-Teacher Perceptions

Students often enter school or the classroom with a preconceived perception of the teacher or content topic. The perception that students bring into the classroom may determine the level of students engagement a student brings with them to the class (Pruitt, Dicks, & Tilley, 2010). Some of these perceptions are word of mouth from former students about the specific teacher, while others have no interest in the content area and therefore have a negative perception. Some of these perceptions may also come from a student's prior experience with a specific teacher or content subject matter (Yerdelen-Damar & Aydin, 2015). Pruitt, Dicks, and Tilley (2010) were not able to specifically identify the cause for these initial perceptions, but found "that instructors do have influence on students' ability to learn and leads to students having an actual experience that is different from their previously held expectations" (p. 43). Therefore, even though students may come with prior perceptions, the teacher does have the ability to influence and change those previous perceptions and expectations. But if a student has

accumulated a specific perspective over time, it is much more of a barrier even with effective teaching practices (Klassen & Tze, 2014).

The feedback obtained during research of student perception of courses, or effective teaching, is often combined as the same thing in the minds of students (Dozier, 2012). If a teacher can offer a course that is engaging and that grabs the students' attention, then the perception for the student is that there is effective teaching taking place (Akar & Yildirim, 2011; Dozier, 2012; Hagay & Baram-Tsabari, 2015; Lemley et al., 2014; Pruitt et al., 2010). Dozier (2012) found that "religious private high school students' perceptions of effective teaching were consistent with results of existing studies on characteristics of effective teaching" (p. 9). A student's perception of success in the classroom environment is often tied to their current and future motivation to learn (Hagay & Baram-Tsabari, 2015; Lemley et al., 2014). If a teacher can create a classroom environment that engages students and creates a positive view of themselves, their teachers, and of the content being learned, research shows a greater motivation and effectiveness toward learning (Burton & Nwosu, 2003; De Lay & Swan, 2014; Hattie, 2009). It is important to consider obtaining student feedback on the teaching practices in the classroom because students are quite aware of effective teaching practices and their feedback can guide teachers toward effective student learning (Dozier, 2012; Hagay & Baram-Tsabari, 2015). It is the responsibility of the school and teacher to gather student perceptions, utilizing that feedback to improve school practices (Dozier, 2012).

Teachers often feel threatened when receiving feedback from students about their classroom practices and view student feedback with skepticism (Kane & Chimwayange, 2014). Gaertner (2014) found in recent studies that student survey feedback results were reliable and valid when evaluating teachers, but questioned how teachers utilized and perceived the feedback

from students. Students are quite aware as to whether a teacher will utilize a student's perspective on a teacher's instructional practices or whether their feedback will be ignored (Gaertner, 2014). In a student's schooling, they will have experienced multiple teachers and methodologies which make their feedback on teaching practices a valid information source (Gaertner, 2014). Research shows that most student feedback is not heard by classroom teachers; however, when teachers do pay attention, students are more motivated in their learning (Gaertner, 2014; Kane & Chimwayange, 2014). Kane and Chimwayange (2014) found that students often see their role as passive learners, where they sit and listen or absorb the information. However, when students are active learners, they are engaged in dialog with teachers making them more aware of teaching practices. As passive learners, students who still do not understand will seek out alternatives to understanding other than asking a teacher, oftentimes asking peers (Kane & Chimwayange, 2014). If teachers gained a student perspective on how best to learn content matter, then they become active learners and see learning as a partnership (Gaertner, 2014; Kane & Chimwayange, 2014).

In addition, teachers often possess beliefs and perceptions about their significance and impact on students. "Teacher's beliefs about themselves and their students have a profound effect on their teaching" (Wilson, 2012, p. 73). The way teachers view their students, the content material, and beliefs in their own teaching abilities can influence their teaching practices (Wilson, 2012). Students have identified characteristics of effective teaching and often teachers' perceptions of their roles differ from what students expect (Siegle, Rubenstein, & Mitchell, 2014; Tatar & Da'as, 2011). Teachers' perceptions of their impact on students' development may have an impact on their teaching practices.

Tatar and Da'as (2011) observed in their study that this perception of teachers' significance may also reflect a particular cultural reference. Nonetheless, one of the most frequent characteristics or perceptions identified by teachers was the teacher as a helper or assistant (Tatar & Da'as, 2011). On the flip side, students also have a list of what is perceived as good teachers, or good teaching, specifically Third Culture Kids (TCKs). Pollock and Van Reken (2009) developed an important definition for TCK considering teaching and learning in an international school.

A Third Culture Kid (TCK) is a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside of the parents' culture. The TCK frequently builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture may be assimilated into the TCK's life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar backgrounds (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009, p. 13)

TCKs value specific characteristics and distinctive viewpoints on effective teaching. TCKs identify effective teaching as those teachers who have the qualifications, experience, and variety of methods to teach a topic, exhibiting expertise in the subject matter being taught (Linton, 2013). Siegle, Rubenstein, and Mitchell (2014) found similar qualities and characteristics from honors students' perceptions of teachers. Those teachers with experience, qualifications, pedagogical proficiency, and extensive content knowledge were able to engage and motivate students (Linton, 2013; Siegle et al., 2014). According to Linton (2013), TCKs enrolled in Christian international schools perceive teachers who have a more relational or caring temperament as quality teachers. Regardless of spiritual or religious backgrounds, Linton (2013) suggests that TCKs believe teachers should be capable of engaging, interacting, and embracing

cultural differences within a school and classroom environment. Unlike TCKs, urban secondary students desire a relationship with teachers and perceive their inattention as a lack of interest in their success (McHugh et al., 2012). Students who hold a positive perception of themselves, their teachers, and the content being taught show greater motivation to learn and greater learning outcomes (De Lay & Swan, 2014).

Student perception of effective learning ultimately revolves around key developmental stages of cognition, moral, and spiritual theories. The key to learning is that students have respect, autonomy, relatedness, and connectedness (Lemley et al., 2014; Radovan & Makovec, 2015). These elements are common among the current generation of students, where they want to have a sense of choice, be a part of an environment that is safe, and be challenged in their learning experiences by being active learners (Lemley et al., 2014). All of these elements are part of the learning environment, and creating student-teacher relationships becomes key in the learning process (Burton & Nwosu, 2003). The teacher needs to find ways to relate and build relationships with the students by delivering content material in a way that engages them and helps them make personal connections with the academic discipline (Akar & Yildirim, 2011; De Lay & Swan, 2014; Hagay & Baram-Tsabari, 2015; Lemley et al., 2014). For teachers to make personal connections with students they must determine student interests, connecting the content to their personal lives (Hagay & Baram-Tsabari, 2015; Radovan & Makovec, 2015).

Just as students bring certain perspectives with them into the classroom, so do teachers. Teachers' perceptions of content and students ultimately have an impact on instructional practices (Akar & Yildirim, 2011). Their own personal beliefs about how students should learn influences their instructional practices, possibly varying across curricular areas (Beusaert et al., 2013; Hogan & Hathcote, 2014). If a teacher perceives that students are showing interest and are

engaged in the content, it will influence how they maintain student engagement and the type of teaching methods utilized (Akar & Yildirim, 2011; Hattie, 2009).

Teaching Methods and Curriculum

Curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices in an American international school are often based upon American public school standards. These standards do not truly reflect the needs of the culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students in an international school setting, but are influenced by, if not patterned after, the traditional norms and values of middle-class White Americans (Bullock et al., 2014; Hogan & Hathcote, 2014). Therefore, the expectations for mathematics, English, social studies, and other core subject areas often reflect a more traditional approach. A Bible curriculum often falls in to the same pattern in a Christian international school setting, where the curriculum is often reflective of what is taught in a white middle class American Sunday school setting (Reck, 2012; Schuitema et al., 2008).

Even though traditional norms and values are being challenged within the classroom walls, there is still significant work in teacher preparedness programs to address the needs of CLD and ELL students in a classroom setting (Berg & Huang, 2015; Harper & de Jong, 2009; Harper & de Jong, 2004; Whitsett & Hubbard, 2009). International schools have always faced a CLD classroom and higher ELL populations, but teachers often are not prepared for the international school setting and need more development on site. Berg and Huang (2015) realize that the increase in CLD in mainstream public schools in the United States will see an increase in teacher development programs, but current programs lack effective preparation for CLD classrooms and ELL populations. Specifically, it appears the concepts of differentiated instruction and curriculum development will not be reserved just for special education, but should be included for mainstream classroom teachers as well (Hogan & Hathcote, 2014). Rather

than assuming all students have language aptitude in the classroom, there will be a need to further develop language proficiency through content instruction and development of academic language (Berg & Huang, 2015; Harper & de Jong, 2009; Whitsett & Hubbard, 2009).

Curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices are also defined by the personal beliefs of each teacher and teacher preparedness programs (Berg & Huang, 2015; Brownlee, Purdie, & Boulton-Lewis, 2001; Brownlee, 2001). A teacher's beliefs impact how students learn, how curriculum is delivered, and possibly how curriculum is selected in a school (Beausaert et al., 2013; Hogan & Hathcote, 2014). A teacher's epistemological belief influences and interacts with the individual's approach to teaching, yet these beliefs do not develop consistently and can impact the learning process (Beausaert et al., 2013; Brownlee, 2001). According to Brownlee (2001), a teacher with an absolute truth belief tends to teach from a "reproductive perspective" (p. 4) and this becomes a one-way learning process in which students are to "receive and acquire information" rather than "make personal meaning and make connections with their prior knowledge" (p. 4). As Christian educators, we do believe in absolute truth and must battle against a one-way teaching practice, allowing students to interact and make mistakes or inaccurate connections with the Bible so they are able to make personal connections. Christian educators must hold to the absolute truth found in the Bible, but find a way to engage students within the classroom that allows learning to be connected with students' own experiences and the teachers' experiences and knowledge (Brownlee, 2001; Saunders-Stewart, Gyles, Shore, & Bracewell, 2015). Not only do teachers' beliefs drive instructional practices, but learning outcomes often drive the selected approaches teachers use toward student learning (Beausaert et al., 2013; Klassen & Tze, 2014). If memorization is a key objective, then the strategy used by the teacher will reflect such practices, but if deeper understanding and application is the desired

outcome, then the teaching practices will reflect that desired objective (Beusaert et al., 2013). Sometimes the desired outcome becomes a blur when the classroom must be differentiated to meet the needs of all learners.

Helping students academically achieve may be a result of differentiated instructional strategies, but it is also a result of students identifying a personal learning style (Toppel, 2015). Evidence from literature suggests the need for more narrative research because there is little empirical evidence on the influence of learning styles with instructional strategies in a classroom setting (Wilson, 2012). There is limited data or research to conclusively argue that matching learning and instructional strategies with individual student learners increases academic achievement (Wilson, 2012). Although there is no conclusive data, Wilson (2012) suggests that:

allowing students to utilize their preferred learning styles, teachers can increase the personal relevance of educational experiences which results in a higher level of mental and emotional engagement and, ultimately, serves to provide meaningful connections between what is learned in school and what goes on in real life. (p. 79)

Engaging and guiding students actively in classroom learning is an instructional strategy that continues to enhance students' long-term memory of content or the schema (Brooks & Thurston, 2010; Ginns, Martin, & Marsh, 2013; Kirschner et al., 2006; Schuitema et al., 2008). In order to engage students in classroom content, teachers need to utilize academic vocabulary on a regular basis and teach "diverse students *through* their own cultural filters" (Gay, 2013, p. 50). Typically, in an international school setting, CLD students make up a higher percentage of students than in an American public school setting. This demographic in American public schools is slowly changing to reflect a more international setting with an increased CLD student population (Bullock et al., 2014). Therefore, academic vocabulary, language learning, and

cultural influence must garner more attention in a mainstream classroom. For example, Alexander-Shea (2011) utilized various teaching strategies to increase the use of academic vocabulary within a social studies classroom. Through the course of the study it was found that the use and implementation of the academic vocabulary words on a frequent and regular basis increased CLD student comprehension of the vocabulary (Alexander-Shea, 2011). This study also suggested that those students who had prior knowledge of the vocabulary could not always use or clearly define the concepts, but in utilizing CLD strategies as a normal practice in the classroom, all students increased in academic vocabulary (Alexander-Shea, 2011). In various studies, when students were able to make connections to their personal experience and the vocabulary, it improved the overall instruction in the classroom as well as enhanced long-term comprehension (Alexander-Shea, 2011; Brooks & Thurston, 2010; Gay, 2013; Rupley & Slough, 2010).

Within a Bible course the academic vocabulary may be considered intense when compared to other subject areas as many new vocabulary words are not only new to CLD students, but to native speakers and are often more theological than concrete. Students may have been previously exposed to higher theological vocabulary, yet not fully comprehend the meaning (Alexander-Shea, 2011). Students who are not only exposed to academic vocabulary but are able to use and implement the words will enhance their comprehension of the terms (Alexander-Shea, 2011; Rupley & Slough, 2010). If comprehension can be increased with theological vocabulary, the possibility that it may lead to a deeper belief or faith may increase. Increasing student comprehension of vocabulary comes with connecting that to a student's personal experience and prior knowledge (Alexander-Shea, 2011). Helping students to comprehend and clearly define

academic vocabulary requires a personal connection and a less textbook definition (Alexander-Shea, 2011; Rupley & Slough, 2010).

Much research has been conducted in instructional strategies over the past decade. The research that has been conducted has varied from minimal guided instruction to full guided instruction (Kirschner et al., 2006; Saunders-Stewart et al., 2015). Instructional strategies range from lecture to individual learning, or what has commonly become known as student-centered learning and teacher-centered learning (Beusaert et al., 2013; ÇUbukÇU, 2012; Saunders-Stewart et al., 2015). Research shows that the teaching methods used in the classroom setting are often dependent on the subject area of the teacher (Saunders-Stewart et al., 2015; Wilson, 2012). For example, those in the sciences are more teacher-centered, whereas the humanities are more student-centered in their approach to teaching (Beusaert et al., 2013). Studies have been conducted at a university level inquiring about student perceptions toward depth and surface level learning based on teaching methods (Braasch & Goldman, 2010). Limited research has been done at the secondary levels. Beusaert et al. (2013) conducted a study of secondary student perceptions and found that those students who were in a student-centered instructional setting perceived a depth of understanding of the material that was significantly correlated with teacher-centered instruction.

When working with second language learners, research has shown that engaging students in conversation helps them develop their English skills, and also facilitates the processing of concepts or content at a higher level (Brooks & Thurston, 2010). If engaging second language learners in conversation helps them to learn content or process a concept, then an assumption can be made that this teaching strategy may also benefit a native English speaker. If a student who is a native English speaker has no background in a specific content area, it would appear that the

best learning strategies would also be group and one-on-one instruction (Brooks & Thurston, 2010).

The use of small group instruction or one-on-one instructional strategies can enhance student discussion in a content area, which can create a deeper understanding of the material (Saunders-Stewart et al., 2015). The classroom environment that is created by a teacher can determine how much students will participate, but more importantly, the openness to express doubts is essential in the development of thoughts and ideas in both intellectual and faith development (Court, 2010). Actively engaging students in discussions or in reading a text that is more conversational than formal may enhance a child's understanding of what is being read (Burton et al., 2006; Ginns et al., 2013; Reck, 2012; Schuitema et al., 2008; Wilson, 2012). Ginns et al., (2013) found that engaging students in reading a conversational text lead to a deeper level of understanding. The research also suggested that curriculum design should consider the change to a more conversational text than a formal text (Ginns et al., 2013). A switch in the design of the text a student reads may enhance personal understanding and also engage in an active processing of the information in the classroom (Ginns et al., 2013). When considering a conversational text in regard to a Bible curriculum, one would need to be cautious in redesigning the Bible toward a conversational text to not take out of context God's true intent of the scriptures. However, using a more conversational approach to teach Biblical concepts, stories, scriptures, and life application may engage students more in discussion and developing a deeper understanding of the Bible. These conversations may allow for more personal discovery and deeper understanding of the Bible within a student's personal experience and framework of life.

Prior Knowledge and Learning

The use of prior knowledge has been found to enhance students' overall learning. Research continues to show that if a child has prior knowledge of content, a schema or framework has been created from which to assimilate or accommodate new content (Bruner, 1960; Gurlitt & Renkl, 2010; Swiderski, 2011; van Kesteren et al., 2014; Williams & Lombrozo, 2013; Yeh et al., 2012). Assimilation of prior knowledge is using what exists within a schema or structure and includes new information within the structure (Gurlitt & Renkl, 2010; Swiderski, 2011). Students who assimilate their prior knowledge are adding to an existing body of information, and if they accommodate they are altering what already exists (van Kesteren et al., 2014). Accommodation of prior knowledge is defined as "the process of making an existing structure more complex or creating an entirely new structure" (Swiderski, 2011, p. 240). Utilizing either assimilation or accommodation, students are using prior knowledge to retrieve or build upon preexisting structures. Helping students to retrieve this prior knowledge is a goal for teachers in content areas or within reading comprehension of texts (van Kesteren et al., 2014).

Students have greater success in retrieving prior knowledge when teachers utilize effective teaching strategies such as explanation, elaboration, chunking, modeling, invoking a schema, concept mapping and conversation (Gurlitt & Renkl, 2010; Swiderski, 2011). As students retrieve the prior knowledge, it is important for teachers to assess the accuracy of the knowledge and help the student make corrections before assimilation or accommodation takes place (Gurlitt & Renkl, 2010; Rupley & Slough, 2010; Swiderski, 2011; Vermeer, 2012; Williams & Lombrozo, 2013; Yeh et al., 2012). When retelling Bible stories, children often have a misinterpretation or added understanding from a previous story when accessing their prior knowledge. It is therefore important to know the misunderstandings of that prior knowledge

(Burton et al., 2006). If the student's explanation or understanding of what has been previously learned is inaccurate, then it could impair future learning and reinforce misconceptions (Williams & Lombrozo, 2013).

Extensive research has been conducted in the past decade particularly in the area of reading comprehension and prior knowledge (Swiderski, 2011; Tarchi, 2010). Much of the research has found that students with prior knowledge, either of content or context, make an easier connection with the text in meaningful ways (Braasch & Goldman, 2010; Bruner, 1996). Students who may not have the prior knowledge have more difficulty making relevant connections with the text, but eventually will be able to make those connections (Braasch & Goldman, 2010; Tarchi, 2010). Within the research of reading comprehension and prior knowledge, a change occurs in fourth grade when students are no longer learning to read, but reading to learn (Rupley & Slough, 2010). This change in the way a student reads to learn impacts all students in their understanding of textbook material and often native English learners have difficulty with fourth grade texts due to this change in the way children read materials (Rupley & Slough, 2010). If this change is difficult for teachers to address with native English speakers, then it can be assumed academic reading comprehension will be even more difficult to identify with second language learners. The increase in the diversity of schools has also increased the number of second language learners and identifying the prior knowledge for these students in a first language can be difficult. In an international school, students are more often second language learners rather than native English learners, and thus academic language in content areas must be developed (Berg & Huang, 2015). Explaining prior knowledge can help the learning process when students use prior knowledge in the process of explanation during learning. Accessing students' prior knowledge through discussion or explanation prior to

instruction can help a teacher address errors and begin to help students reconstruct a new cognitive structure to work from, enhancing student learning (Yeh et al., 2012).

In a classroom, second language learners may struggle with class discussions for fear of failure, not in the content, but in the communication of their thoughts. The academic vocabulary in content areas is often not the everyday vocabulary that is being used outside of the classroom walls (Rupley & Slough, 2010). Students do not learn the academic vocabulary in everyday conversation or general conversation outside of the classroom. Therefore, teaching academic vocabulary must meet the needs of the diverse classroom, but teachers must also find ways to hook academic vocabulary to student personal experience (Alexander-Shea, 2011; Rupley & Slough, 2010). In order to make vocabulary more comprehensible, teachers need to engage students' prior knowledge and connect to personal experiences, rather than always using the formal textbook definition (Alexander-Shea, 2011; Rupley & Slough, 2010). Alexander-Shea (2011) found that the development of academic vocabulary in social studies was a key to the students' comprehension of the content.

Students who are also learning a second language often have a preconceived belief about how to act when answering questions in class or engaging in discussion. They hesitate to speak up in class because they believe their language should be without mistakes, but they may also lack the academic vocabulary (Alexander-Shea, 2011; DiCerbo, Anstrom, Baker, & Rivera, 2014; Yoshida, 2013). Discussion of content allows students to explore and navigate beyond prior knowledge while utilizing vocabulary in a safe environment. This must be done in an environment that encourages conversation without fear of making mistakes and with the use of vocabulary, language, or application of content material (Gurlitt & Renkl, 2010; Yeh et al., 2012; Yoshida, 2013).

As students navigate and discuss various subject areas, they slowly develop critical thinking skills that can be developed and transferred across content areas (Abrami et al., 2015; Stack-Nelson, 2014). Some research shows that knowledge of a content or subject area is necessary for critical thinking within that domain of knowledge (Stack-Nelson, 2014). Therefore, prior knowledge may be needed to further develop critical thinking of content and to further advance deeper understanding of content areas (Abrami et al., 2015). If teachers use effective strategies within their content domains, they can help students develop critical thinking skills (Hattie, 2009). Some of the most notable and effective strategies to increase critical thinking skills are teacher posed questions and discussion opportunities in the classroom, as well as authentic problems or student role play requiring the use of the skills being learned (Abrami et al., 2015). Abrami et al. (2015) identified that the most effective way to develop critical thinking skills is through combining dialogue, authentic instruction, and mentorship.

In a religious educational setting, a Bible classroom environment must be set up in a way that allows for participants to express doubts about the intellectual and faith development (Johnson-Miller, 2013). Within a Christian international school, Bible classroom teachers face a wide variety of developmental levels including students' prior knowledge, academic skill levels, language proficiency levels, and spiritual maturity levels. They must teach all students within the same classroom setting. Students who have no prior Biblical knowledge or limited knowledge of the content will be taught the same material as those who have extensive prior knowledge on the subject matter. Braasch and Goldman (2010) found that students with prior knowledge in science made easier connections with the text in a more meaningful way, but if they were learning the material or targeted content for the first time it was difficult to make relevant connections. How are Bible teachers to create a classroom learning environment to meet all the needs of the

students in the classroom, while meaningfully sowing seeds into the lives of students, with a prayerful desire for inner transformation of each student?

Worldview Identity

Worldview identity and religious identity are sometimes defined similarly, but the development of both ideas are different, even though they have significant parallels. Cohen-Malayev, Schachter, and Rich (2014) described religious identity as being “used to refer to an individual’s religious self-definition and to the significance ascribed to religion in one’s self-definition” (p. 206). This religious identity does incorporate worldview identity as many students will associate it with their particular religion (Mayhew, Bowman, & Rockenbach, 2014), but worldview is often defined as “inclusive of a multiplicity of beliefs and values that inform both private and public thoughts and actions” (Valk, 2012, p. 160). Cohen-Malayev et al. (2014) found that in religious educational settings in Israel, students’ religiosity, or “adherence to religious beliefs” (p. 206), was affected, but it was not determined if the religious identity or worldview of adolescents was affected.

When reflecting on the development of a worldview identity in students, one must consider the influence that parents, peers, and mentors have on the adolescent (Chan & Wong, 2014; Cohen-Malayev et al., 2014; Layton et al., 2011; Vermeer, 2010). These influences are often deemed a form of socialization or identity formation that in time evolves into a religious or worldview identity (Vermeer, 2010). Vermeer (2010) would argue that religious education may not necessarily help form a worldview identity, but the values and morals that are taught help students engage in society in a civic manner. True religious, specifically Christian, education does not just seek to impart moral values, but rather desires for an inner-heart transformation within the student. This identity formation is based on a Biblical worldview and upon the

absolute truth found in the Bible. Though this inner change is desired by parents, mentors, and peers, it is most often reflected in a religious identity or social identity (Cohen-Malayev et al., 2014; Layton et al., 2011, 2012; Vermeer, 2012; Vermeer & Ven, 2006).

The development of religious and social identity is not solidified during adolescence. If applying FDT to worldview identity, it is during the young adulthood, ages 17-30, when many students will question faith, beliefs, and religion (Love, 2002; Parks, 1982, 2011). It is a time of developing values, morals, and faith, often using the feedback and input from peers, parents, mentors, as well as previous cognitive development (Carpendale, 2000; Fowler, 1991; Mayhew et al., 2014; Vermeer & Ven, 2006). Students enrolled in a Christian school often struggle with identifying their own personal worldview, because sometimes teachers cannot clearly articulate their worldview (Brickhill, 2010; Long, 2014). If the desire of Christian education is for students to develop a worldview, specifically a Biblical worldview, then teachers must consider mentoring, small groups, or other forms of individual interaction with students to model a sincere, Biblical, Christian worldview identity (Brickhill, 2010; Long, 2014; Schuitema et al., 2008). Furthering a Christian worldview identity often comes through small group Bible studies where there is interaction, engagement, and discussion about the way someone thinks or perceives God, the Bible, or other religious beliefs (White, 2002).

There are several factors that impact a student's worldview development. A few research studies conducted in Christian schools in North America found that a student's involvement and commitment to a local church, length of their personal faith commitment, and family background and support were three significant factors in a high school student's Biblical worldview development (Bryant, 2008; Meyer, 2005). If these are considered key significant factors for high school students in Christian schools in North America, then are they significant in an

international Christian school setting where all three factors are missing in the student's development? In a Christian international school setting, such as in China, there is not a local church, students come from a wide variety of backgrounds, not all of which are grounded in Christian values, and many do not have a long belief or faith commitment. The sole influence for many of these students is the Christian school they attend where they interact with Christian teachers, attend weekly assemblies, and learn in daily Bible courses. If these factors are missing, does the role of the teacher and school become parent, mentor, peer, and church body? If that is the situation, then will a student's worldview and faith development differ from worldview and faith development in a Christian school in North America?

The amount of time a child spends in religious education or a Christian school is not a significant factor in the development of a Biblical worldview, but the length of time someone possesses a personal faith commitment better predicts the level of Biblical worldview development (Bryant, 2008; Meyer, 2005). In a Christian international school, it is important for the school to be a place of safety and openness as children question their faith and worldview. Although Christian educators truly desire for students to be transformed internally, it is ultimately the work of the Holy Spirit to change someone's heart. That should not stop Christian schools from teaching Bible and developing a knowledge base upon which students have an opportunity to build a Biblical Christian worldview. Pearcey (2005) identifies the need to help our children gain a heart for religion, but more importantly that "Young believers need a 'brain' religion—training in worldview and apologetics—to equip them to analyze and critique the competing worldviews they will encounter when they leave home" (p. 19). In today's society, children will need both a heart and head faith to survive the constant traps and struggles in the world around them.

When working with TCKs one must recognize the identity they have already developed from living outside of their birth culture. TCKs have often been identified as having no culture or a confused culture because their sense of belonging is either in “multiple places or else nowhere” (Moore & Barker, 2012, p. 555). Moore and Barker (2012) found that TCKs are like chameleons and able to shift identity based on their location. This shifting identity has an impact on one’s worldview identity, which Moore and Barker (2012) found was a broad worldview that can “simultaneously be ethnocentric and ethnorelative” (p. 559). A worldview and personal identity can be influenced by various events throughout one’s life. Those students who experience living in foreign countries begin to foster a transnational identity that often challenges their own culture and other cultures (Biniecki & Conceição, 2014). Students who have lived or grew up overseas often interweave various cultures into their worldview and personal identity; therefore, culture or nationalism often plays less of a role in their identity than with those students who have not had the experience of living overseas (Biniecki & Conceição, 2014; Moore & Barker, 2012).

If TCKs have these tendencies, a Christian worldview might be a grounding force or give them a sense of belonging that they can take with them wherever they go. This additional complexity of TCK identity development must be considered when working with these students in a Christian international school environment. Many of them have already experienced many cultures in the world and have developed a cognitive basis from this experience. Culture does influence the development of a person’s worldview (Meyer, 2005). For TCKs developing a worldview identity is possibly influenced further by the various countries and cultures experienced during their developmental years.

Summary

In the overall study of theories, there are two overarching categories that influence this research; cognitive development theories and faith and worldview development theories. Piaget's cognitive development provides the research necessary to identify key aspects of the intellectual development of students. It will be important to view this research through a cross-cultural lens of cognitive development and language learner instructional practices. The moral and faith development theories also provide the foundational research for this study. At times, there is a vague distinction between religious, spiritual, and faith development. All three are often combined into one, which may fall into a moral development theory. Yet, for the purposes of this study, faith and spiritual development will be viewed as the same, while moral development is treated as a separate theory. However, the overall focus of this research is on the cognitive and faith development in adolescents, even though moral development must be considered in adolescents.

Curriculum being developed today is inclusive of moral education or character education and, in a Christian school, this must not be equated to a child's faith development (Rosenberg, 2011; Schuitema et al., 2008). With the advancement of the need for more moral or character education in American public schools, it is appearing more regularly in textbooks and curriculum in the selection of stories and moral dilemmas students analyze or answer questions about, but Christian schools must not assume this is a form of Biblical integration, religious, or faith development (Rosenberg, 2011; Schuitema et al., 2008; Gretchen Marie Wilhelm, 2005). Christian educators must not only be focused on the development of faith or morals in students, but also with their cognitive development. Yet the content of high school Bible classes is often at

a seminary level and it does not meet the needs of the students' cognitive development and individual faith development in the classroom (Reck, 2012; Webster et al., 2012).

Research has been published with regard to differentiation, instructional strategies, learning styles and student perceptions (Hattie, 2009). Most of this literature focuses on general education courses or within the context of a closed enrollment Christian school. Research that has been conducted on moral and spiritual formation has been predominately at the collegiate level and limited at the high school level. Limited research has been conducted toward open enrollment Christian schools and their Bible curriculum, and the research that has been conducted has not been within an international setting. Within the context of this unique environment, teachers must utilize best teaching practices, but must have the additional component of combining cognitive, moral, religious, and faith development in one classroom setting. In order to better meet the needs of students in developing these areas, further identification and understanding of student perspectives and the impact it currently has on their lives is important.

Bible teachers at Christian international schools are not only working toward cognitive and moral development, but are addressing students' faith development. This requires a more thorough knowledge of the individual students' backgrounds and identification of the academic support these students need. Knowing what is best for individual students in a diverse setting is essential for Bible teachers and the development of a proper curriculum structure in an international Christian school setting.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate students' perceptions of the impact of the Bible curriculum and the teachers' instructional delivery of that curriculum on grade 12 international school students at an open enrollment Christian international school in Asia. The focus of the case study was to determine the effectiveness of Bible curriculum delivery methods and the impact on development of students' worldviews. The purpose of this chapter is to present the proposed research design and research questions, review the site setting, participants, procedures, and researcher's role, and describe the research process of data collection and analysis. Finally, the chapter will close with a discussion of trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

Design

A qualitative case study was selected due to the nature of the "how" and "why" of the research questions asked, the contemporary and bounded focus of the research, and the researcher's desire to gain an understanding of a real-world case that would guide the development of Biblical curriculum (Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2014). The desire was to establish what students perceive of a Bible curriculum and its impact on students within a Christian international school context. Due to the investigation of perceptions, experiences, understandings, and feelings, a qualitative case study approach was best suited for this research (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). A case study allowed me to investigate these aspects in an environment that was bounded by time and place in a real-life situation (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1998; Schwandt, 2015). Utilizing a case study approach for my research helped me to further understand student perceptions of the Bible curriculum within the context of a Christian

international school (Stake, 1995). A better understanding of this particular case and setting may possibly contribute to future development of an appropriate Bible curriculum and its instructional delivery at Christian international schools. A case study allowed for the identification of themes and a description of the data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2012, 2013). Case studies have several approaches, but this case study was an instrumental case study due to “the purpose of illuminating a particular issue” (Creswell, 2012, p. 465). The identification and description of the issue led to assertions about implementation of Bible curriculum and needs in future development of the curriculum.

Research Questions

The following research sub-questions were developed based on the central question for this study: How does the perception of both the content of a Bible curriculum and the teachers’ instructional delivery of that Bible curriculum affect students at an open enrollment Christian international school in Asia? To better understand student perceptions of the Bible curriculum and instructional strategies used to deliver the curriculum, the following sub-questions are:

1. How does grade 12 international school students’ prior knowledge of the Bible or Christianity impact their perceptions of a Christian international school’s Bible curriculum?
2. How do the high school Bible classes at a Christian international school impact the perceived moral, faith, and worldview development of grade 12 international school students?
3. How does a Christian international school teacher’s instructional delivery method in a Bible class impact grade 12 international school students’ perceptions of the Bible curriculum, and their moral, faith, or worldview development?

4. How does an international school students' family background impact their perceptions of the Bible or Christianity and their moral, faith, or worldview development?

Setting

Within Asia is a consortium of seven Christian schools that cater to an international clientele. All the schools are nondenominational, use the same practices and protocols for hiring teachers, and have similar student enrollment practices. The consortium of schools also adheres to the same standards and benchmarks for their Bible curriculum, but does not teach the same content classes across the system. All seven schools are considered open enrollment schools and allow students from all religious backgrounds to enroll. Students, therefore, come from a variety of cultural and religious backgrounds and all students are required to take daily Bible classes and attend weekly assemblies. Assemblies in the context of this setting are also known as chapel in other Christian school environments. The identification of this consortium of schools within Asia met the following criteria: (a) they were all ACSI affiliated schools; (b) they all offer grades K-12; and (c) six of the seven schools had been in existence long enough that the current grade 12 students could have attended all grades in the high school. All schools associated with the consortium range in enrollment from 150-450 students, which allows for a variety of class sizes and possible teaching strategies. Finally, the consortium of schools was of convenience for me and was secured through my association with the superintendent of schools, as well as my employment with the consortium. From the seven schools, one school was selected, Sky International School (SIS), as the setting for this research. SIS presented the greatest probability of providing the number of participants needed for the study. SIS was of convenience for me and did not require a relocation to another city for the duration of the study. SIS is a pseudonym for

the school and ensures anonymity, which will be followed when mentioning any consortium of schools in Asia, as well as all participants in this study.

SIS is currently the largest school within the consortium and is the best setting, due to longevity of the school and the expected number of graduates for the 2016-2017 academic year which is 33, larger than the other schools in the consortium. All students within the school must hold a passport from another country and no national citizens are permitted to enroll within the school per government regulations. SIS is located in the Asia region and holds affiliation with ACSI and the East Asia Regional Council for Schools (EARCOS). The school is also accredited through the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), by the local city government education bureau, and the national government education bureau, with names and titles withheld to maintain the anonymity of the school site.

SIS, established in 1986, is a Christian international school with a current enrollment of 422 in Preschool-12, with 147 enrolled in the high school. In the 2016-2017 school year SIS enrolled 23 nationalities with the majority of the student enrollment representing South Korea, United States, Japan, and Hong Kong. Due to the focus of this case study on the school's Bible curriculum, it is of significance to know the student and parental religious preferences. Parental religious preferences may have an impact on student perceptions of Bible courses as well as worldview development. This information is gathered by SIS when families complete the enrollment application and is updated each year when families re-enroll for the next school year. During this application process, it is not required for parents or students to identify a religious preference as it has no bearing on enrollment in the school. SIS parental and student religious preferences for the fall of 2016 were obtained from the school Registrar's Office and are available in Table 1.

Table 1

Percentages of Parental & Student Religious Preferences for SIS (Fall 2016)

| Religious Preference | Father | Mother | Student |
|----------------------|--------|--------|---------|
| None | 45 | 39 | 41 |
| Protestant | 40 | 44 | 44 |
| Catholic | 5 | 6 | 5 |
| Buddhist | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Other or No response | 7 | 9 | 9 |

Participants

Participants for this study were selected due to their location and length of attendance within a Christian international school setting. This use of purposeful sampling allowed for specific information, or what Patton (2015) refers to as “information-rich cases” (p. 255). The use of purposeful sampling requires three considerations: “[W]hom to select as participants (or sites) for the study, the specific type of sampling strategy, and the size of the sample to be studied” (Creswell, 2013, p.155). Those participants should have experience in the phenomenon being studied or they may be convenient for the study (Creswell, 2012, 2013; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2014). For this research, the participants all had a minimum of three years’ experience in the phenomenon and were conveniently located for me to access. Sampling strategies or types of sampling were determined based upon purpose of the study. Finally, since the sample size is based on the type of qualitative inquiry to be pursued, the recommendation for a case study is four to five participants, and there were six participants for this study (Creswell, 2012, 2013).

The participants for this study were selected using purposeful sampling based on convenience and their personal experience and exposure to the Bible curriculum at the high school level. Participants for this study were current grade 12 students at SIS. A minimum of five students and a maximum of 15 students were sought for participation. All student participants had to be currently enrolled in grade 12 and associated with SIS. Student participants needed to

meet the following criteria: (a) were currently enrolled in grade 12 with the intention of graduating; (b) had completed grades nine through 11 at SIS; (c) had taken the required high school Bible courses from grades nine to 11 at SIS; (d) and were currently enrolled in a grade 12 Bible course. A total of 18 students responded to the survey; six did not meet the criteria and were removed from further communication to obtain participants. Of the 12 remaining participants only seven responded to the follow-up email to schedule a first interview. Through the course of collecting data one participant failed to complete journal entries and the final interview and therefore was removed from the study. Therefore, in total six participants completed the study, and the data collected and results of this study are reflective of these final six participants. I proceeded with the six participants because accessing and including additional participants in the study would be problematic based on the methodology of the study. In addition, the unusual circumstances in the country make it impractical to solicit additional participants without me moving to another city for four weeks to gather the data. Subsequently, this problem was reviewed and waived by Liberty's School of Education and the six participants were used for the study.

Maximal variation sampling is a form of purposeful sampling in which participants all experience the same phenomenon, but some traits may differ, such as gender or ethnicity (Creswell, 2012). Using maximal variation sampling allowed me to gather information from a number of individuals with multiple perspectives. Each of these participants varied in characteristics such as religious preference, ethnicity, first language, worldview, and family background (Creswell, 2012). With the established parameters for identifying participants it was expected that no more than 15 students would participate in the study.

Procedures

Prior to data collection, I received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Liberty University (see Appendix H). There were no such requirements needed to conduct this study in the host country of the international school. A letter of invitation was sent to the superintendent of schools and the head principal for the setting of this study (see Appendix F and G). A written letter of approval from the school administration, including the superintendent of schools and the local school head principal, was obtained prior to conducting data collection within the school. Once approval was granted, all grade 12 students received an email with a link to a survey, via Survey Monkey™, to be completed, which allowed me to identify students who met the previously stated criteria (see Appendix A). Student email addresses were obtained from the school registrar and high school principal. The survey and all email communication with participants was sent out from my Liberty University student email account to all grade 12 students.

Survey results were tabulated and participants were identified based on the stated criteria. All potential participants and their parents received a combined consent form to complete and return to me prior to the first individual interview or on the day of their first interview (see Appendix E). The consent form was sent to each potential student participant via email. A combined consent form was used as all student participants were over the age of 15.

Once consent forms were sent out via email, I began to set up face-to-face interviews with all participants. No individual interviews took place until the consent was received and many participants delivered it to me the day of their interview. Student participants were individually interviewed by me twice, one time face-to-face during the first week of the study, and a second follow-up interview face-to-face during the fourth week of the study (see Appendix

B). All interviews were voice recorded, using both my personal laptop and iPhone, and later transcribed by me on my laptop. All voice recordings were uploaded onto my computer for storage and transcription using a Computer Assisted Qualitative Database Analysis Software (CAQDAS) program entitled NVivo™, produced by QSR International (“NVivo qualitative data analysis software,” 2016). Students were also asked to keep a digital journal that was submitted on a weekly basis to me via email (see Appendix C). Participants also took part in two types of focus groups throughout the course of the study. The first focus group meeting met during the second week of the study and included all participants together (see Appendix D). During this first focus group meeting all participants met in the same group together to answer questions pertaining to the Bible curriculum, personal take-a-ways from the courses, and teaching practices. The second focus group meeting was during the third week of the study and participants were placed into a focus group based on their survey response and first interview responses as to how they would self-identify their belief as being Christian or non-Christian; each of these groups had three participants each. During both focus group meetings participants had a set of open-ended questions that guided them through the discussions, kept the discussions moving, and ensured participants stayed on topic. All focus group meetings were audio recorded using an additional microphone for group recordings, hooked up to my laptop. All focus groups utilized open-ended guided questions (see Appendix D). Each focus group meeting occurred on the school premises due to the convenience for the students, but was located in a section of the building where high school classes do not occur and high school teachers do not frequent.

Data analysis used patterns, themes, and content analysis (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2015; Schwandt, 2015; Yin, 2014). The analysis began as soon as data were collected. I utilized memoing, open coding, enumeration processes, and member checking in

order to identify themes from the data collected and to ensure triangulation and trustworthiness of the analysis (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2015; Yin, 2014). Data analysis informally began during the initial review of interviews and journals, while formal in vivo and initial coding began after all the interviews were transcribed and the journal reflections were received from each participant. The process of compiling, disassembling, and reassembling of codes went through several iterations before five common themes or overarching themes emerged (Saldaña, 2015; Yin, 2015).

The Researcher's Role

My primary role in this research was to conduct the study and analyze the data collected. Throughout the course of the study, I met with all the participants through individual interviews and focus group meetings. I read personal journal entries from each student participant over the course of three weeks. During the entire process, I was aware of the values and position I brought to the analysis of the data and utilized the process of reflection called reflexivity (Creswell, 2012).

As a current employee of the consortium and former employee of one of the schools within the consortium being studied, there is a professional relationship with both the superintendent and the individual principals at the school. This introduces the possibility of bias in the interpretation of the data due to my role as the curriculum coordinator, and my future desire to write an international Bible curriculum. I have a preconceived idea that current Bible curriculum and teacher practices are not effective within the consortium of schools, which may affect the lens I used to interpret the data.

I have also worked within the Christian international school setting for over fifteen years. My experience within this setting has generated a strong desire to increase the impact of Bible

curriculum and classes in students' lives beyond the academic realm. During my time overseas, numerous casual conversations have occurred with teachers, students, and parents concerning the Bible curriculum and classes within the schools and their effectiveness.

My role as the researcher in this case study was to identify themes that may exist from the students within the school regarding Bible classes. My goal was to identify themes through a collection of data that might encourage further research needed in the area of Bible curriculum within the Christian international school. A key role as the researcher was to remember that ultimately the desired inner-heart transformation of students is due to the Holy Spirit and, as educators, we are the mere vessels in communicating the Gospel and truth about God.

Data Collection

Approval from the IRB was required prior to data collection for the following data collection methods. I also investigated whether there was an agency within the host country that would need to be contacted for approval, and there are no such agencies that apply to this particular research. In this section I have included a description of the process for data collection, along with a rationale for each method of collection. From the data collection it was important to identify themes through a triangulation approach. Data triangulation “uses multiple investigators, multiple sources of data, or multiple methods to confirm the emerging findings” (Merriam, 1998, p.204). Triangulation of the data checks the integrity of data and ultimately the validity of the procedure (Schwandt, 2015). Data triangulation was achieved in this research using interviews, focus group interviews, and individual journal entries as sources of evidence. In qualitative research the process of data collection and analysis occur simultaneously rather than linearly (Merriam, 1998; Saldaña, 2015; Yin, 2015).

For my research the sequence in which data were collected began with individual interviews of all participants. The individual interview utilized semi-structured and open-ended questions, allowing me to ask additional questions as follow-up or further explanation as needed during the course of the interview (see Appendix B). During the individual interview, I also explained to student participants the process for their weekly journal writing and submission process. This information pertaining to their weekly journal writings was also sent to them via email and as a reminder each week. After all individual interviews had been conducted, focus groups were scheduled to discuss general questions and topics for each specific group (see Appendix D). A further subdivision of student focus groups was identified based on information from the original survey and individual interview answers as to whether they placed themselves in a Christian or non-Christian category. This allowed for student groups to meet in one further group with similar religious preferences. Once all focus groups met, one final individual interview occurred with each student participant. Throughout the process of interviews and focus groups, students also kept a weekly journal of reflective responses concerning their Bible classes and learning practices during that week in the classroom (see Appendix C). These journal entries began after the first individual interview and continued simultaneously with the focus group interviews and the final individual interviews until the final week of the study, week four.

This sequence of data collection was chosen because there was a need to identify an individual's personal perceptions before engaging with other students in a focus group. The individual interview needed to occur first to properly form the student focus groups and help student participants understand the weekly journal writing component. Following the initial interviews, student participants began journal writing and participating in focus group meetings simultaneously. Using information from individual interviews also helped guide me to further

develop the focus group discussion topics or journal entries beyond the previously identified questions. Focus groups needed to occur second in sequence in order to allow participants to hear others' thoughts and ideas that may generate additional thinking by individuals after the first interview. There was a specific need to follow up the student focus group meetings with final individual meetings to ascertain if any responses shifted during the process or if additional thoughts came to light through the course of the study. The final interview was done the same week as the final journal entry and the final set of open-ended questions was guided by the previous three weeks of evidence. It placed the student participants in three different settings, from a private one-on-one setting, to a more public setting, and finally to a more personal setting.

Interviews

Interviews all utilized open-ended questions and allowed me to observe the participants' behaviors during the interview process (Creswell, 2012). Semi-structured interviews began with a pre-determined list of questions. The order of questions was not set, nor did I always stay on the prescribed questions, which usually gathered common data, such as socioeconomic status or gender (Merriam, 1998). The use of open-ended, semi-structured interview questions allowed for flexibility during the interview and allowed follow-up questions if new topics emerged during the interview process (Merriam, 1998).

The use of interviews in this research permitted participants to voice their perspective in a clear manner that was not impeded by my perspective (Creswell, 2012). All participants were interviewed twice in a face-to-face setting. During these face-to-face settings, the interviews were audio recorded. All interviews were audio recorded with both my computer and iPhone™ and were uploaded into the NVivo™ software ("NVivo qualitative data analysis software," 2016), and then transcribed by me personally. All interviews were no longer than one hour in

length. During all the interview sessions, I took minimal notes on my iPad™, mainly for the purposes of responding to participant responses that may bring forth a new idea regarding the topic at hand. These notes were synced via Dropbox and uploaded to NVivo™ (“NVivo™ qualitative data analysis software,” 2016) for storage.

Each of the interview questions were designed to gather information and themes present and reflective of the proposed research questions. The interview questions all pertained to the students’ environment, their understanding and perceptions, the Bible curriculum and impact of teachers’ instructional methods in Bible classes (see Appendix B). The research questions for this study were all addressed within individual participant interviews.

The following open ended questions were used for the interviews:

1. How would you describe Christianity?
2. What did you know about the Bible prior to the class at SIS?
3. How did what you previously knew about the Bible or Christianity impact your view of taking Bible class?
4. How would you describe your values and beliefs prior to taking Bible courses at SIS? Describe yourself (actions, responses to others, behavior, academics, worldview, etc.,) prior to taking Bible classes at SIS (from grade 9-12).
5. How would you describe how Bible classes have impacted your values and beliefs? Describe yourself (actions, responses to others, behavior, academics, worldview, etc.,) after taking Bible classes at SIS (from grade 9-12).
6. Describe all of the required courses you take at SIS to graduate.
7. What impact have the Bible classes in grades 9-12 at SIS had on you personally?
8. What Bible class in grades 9-12 was the least beneficial for you personally? Why?

9. What Bible class in grades 9-12 was the most beneficial for you personally?
Why?
10. What are some examples of how you have applied what you have learned in Bible class to your daily life?
11. What do you believe is missing from Bible classes at SIS?

Student interview questions 1 and 2 were specifically designed to address a student's prior knowledge and the preconceived ideas of the subject to identify the impact it may have on a student's perceptions of taking the course material. A student's cognitive development or prior knowledge may hinder the ability to add knowledge or create new knowledge (Brainerd, 1978; Fortosis & Garland, 1990; Gurlitt & Renkl, 2010). Piaget suggested that if a child has not developed a specific concept, then building upon that concept is useless until a foundational knowledge has been developed (Brainerd, 1978). If a student has a preconceived idea about a subject matter or class, then it can affect the learning process. Student perceptions of material plays a role in the respect for learning or desire to learn that subject matter, and therefore, may have an impact on the required Bible courses.

In order to address the impact of teacher delivery of the content material, student interview questions 5, 7, 8, and 10 were developed. Asking students to describe the required courses offered an opportunity to access some preconceived ideas, as well as highlighted specific teaching practices from the courses they experienced. Interview questions 7 and 8 specifically targeted student experiences in the classroom by asking them least and most beneficial aspects of the class, with follow up explanations of why they have those beliefs. Effective teaching is often seen through the eyes of the student as being engaged in the material or attention grabbing for the students (Dozier, 2012; Hagay & Baram-Tsabari, 2015; Lemley et al., 2014).

Students also have a good understanding of their own personal development in terms of moral and faith development. Third culture kids (TCKs) have a unique identity influenced by many factors that often shape an individual's cognitive, moral, and faith development (Fowler & Dell, 2004; Long, 2014; Moore & Barker, 2012; Valk, 2012). Asking students to describe themselves prior to Bible classes at SIS and their current situation allowed for identification of their perception of moral and faith development. Questions 3, 4, 6, and 9 were designed specifically to address the moral and faith development perception of a student, particularly with regard to the Bible classes. Reflection on these questions elicited personal thoughts and insight into an individual's faith and moral development in light of cognitive development (Foster & LaForce, 1999; Fowler & Dell, 2004; Fowler, 1991; M. R. Fowler, 2009; King & Boyatzis, 2004; Parks, 2011).

All student interview questions were piloted utilizing two high school students that were neither in the participant pool nor at the site location of this study, but within a similar school setting. The purpose of piloting of the questions was to allow for refinement of questions that may be confusing, as well as identification of questions that may need to be added to the interview protocol (Merriam, 1998). The pilot took place after IRB approval and two weeks prior to using them with actual participants in this study. The questions that were piloted were not altered from their original design as the students who piloted them found the questions easy to understand and answer.

During the interview process I was aware of my presence in the interview and the possibility that the participants may give me what I want to hear rather than what they truly think or feel. The atmosphere which I created for the student interviews was essential and conducting

the interviews in a private non-high trafficked area allowed for students to feel more at ease to share.

Journaling

As described by Creswell (2012), public and private documentation are ways to gather information around central phenomena through text data. One form of private documentation is the use of journaling. For this study, the journaling was research-generated as participants were asked to complete journal entries each week during the course of this study (Merriam, 1998). These entries provided me with a form of documentation that provided data in the words of the participants. Over the course of three weeks, participants were asked to journal reflective thoughts and ideas using a digital format. The use of digital journal entries allowed for easier and instant access, decreasing the possibility of not being able to read the participants' handwriting. To obtain more accurate and credible entries from participants, specific instructions on the format, length, and submission process were provided during the initial interview and sent to each participant via email (Creswell, 2012). Journal entries were added to the data information collected from interviews and focus groups, but were a more personal data source for each participant. Each journal entry was emailed to me and was uploaded into the NVivo™ database for storage and later analysis ("NVivo qualitative data analysis software," 2016). The journal documentation was unstructured in that participants were able to reflect upon the classes for that week using a journal entry set of guided questions (see Appendix C). The following were the journal entry guided questions:

1. How would you describe the personal impact your Bible class had on you this week?
2. If you were the teacher, how would you have taught the content for the Bible class this week?

3. What is something from this week's class that made you think and want to "dig deeper" or you may have further questions about?
4. What did you not understand this week from Bible class and why did you not understand?
5. Overall how would you summarize your Bible class this week?
6. Any other observations from your Bible class this week?

Student participants maintained a weekly digital journal that focused on two aspects of the Bible class. The first aspect was on the students' view of what they studied in Bible class that given week and any personal application of what they learned. The second response was tied to students' perceptions of the teacher delivery methods during that week. Through the reflective journaling process, participants provided information with regard to perceptions, impact, and overall sense of feeling from the courses during that week. Through the two general topics of journal entries, the participants were able to address the research question related to prior knowledge, teacher delivery methods, and perception of moral, faith, or worldview development.

All journal responses were sent to me digitally and uploaded into the NVivo™ software ("NVivo qualitative data analysis software," 2016), where I began the process of memoing and annotating the journal responses. Memoing is a process that allows the researcher to write notes and commentary on the content obtained (Schwandt, 2015). Memoing allowed me to write my thoughts and begin capturing possible codes or themes from participant journal entries. This process also allowed me to reflect on the process I selected to analyze the journal entries and begin to create questions that were utilized in the final interview.

Focus Groups

Group interviews or focus groups allow for participants to collectively discuss the issue or topic of the study (Patton, 2015). Focus group participants usually have similar backgrounds or experiences and generally comprise six to 10 people (Patton, 2015). Open-ended questions allowed participants to freely respond, with the common sharing of experiences, eliciting further ideas and responses (Creswell, 2012; Patton, 2015). The use of focus groups was designed to “get high-quality data in a social context where people can consider their own views in the context of the views of others” (Patton, 2015, p. 475).

Participants for this study engaged in a minimum of two focus group meetings. Caution was exhibited during focus group meetings so as not to alienate any participant due to ethnic or religious background. During the focus group meetings, there was no sense of alienation, but an effort was made to ensure that everyone participated, especially the softer-spoken participants. Each focus group meeting occurred on the school premises due to the convenience for the students. The meeting room was located in a section of the building where high school classes and teachers do not frequent. During the discussion, I sat with the participants, taking notes and guiding the discussion with the open-ended questions, while keeping the group from going too far off topic by asking clarifying questions from participant responses. All student participants met together for the first focus group meeting. This first meeting utilized an open-ended guided questioning process. The second meeting subdivided the student participants based on their stated religious preferences, either Christian and non-Christian, during the initial survey and individual interview. This focus group meeting followed the same structure as the first student focus group meeting. All focus group meetings were audio recorded with a microphone attached to my personal laptop and with my iPhone™ as backup. I took additional notes during the

meeting on my iPad™. All of the focus group meetings were conducted in the same manner allowing participants to discuss open-ended, guided questions (see Appendix A). Again, I sat with each group taking notes and observing, asking the questions and guiding the discussion with follow-up questions, and refocusing the group if it began to stall or go off topic. The guided questions for each set of focus group meetings were as follows:

All students

1. What examples of lessons can you give that you remember and what you learned from those lessons? Why were they significant to remember? How did it impact you personally?
2. What specific information from Bible class have you discussed or debated with someone else? Why did you continue that discussion outside of the classroom?
3. How do Bible classes impact your worldview, moral choices, or faith choice?

Christian students

1. How would you describe Christianity?
2. What is your view of the required Bible classes?
3. In what ways did the Bible courses challenge you in the application of your beliefs?
4. What is the most difficult aspect of the Bible courses at SIS?
5. How could Bible classes at SIS help you further develop your beliefs?
6. How would you describe the labels you have received by teachers or students at SIS because of your beliefs?
7. What are ways that Bible teachers have enhanced your experience in the Bible classroom?

Non-Christian students

1. How would you describe Christianity?
2. What is your view of the required Bible classes?
3. Why does SIS require Bible courses for all students?
4. What is the most difficult aspect of the Bible courses at SIS?
5. What are ways that the Bible teachers have helped you to have a better understanding of Christianity and the Bible?
6. How would you describe the labels you have received, if any, by teachers or students at SIS because of your beliefs?

The focus group meetings allowed me to gather data regarding the research questions related to teacher delivery method, impact of Bible class on development of morals, worldview, and faith, and overall perceptions of the Bible curriculum at SIS.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data analysis process does not happen in a linear construct, but takes place simultaneously and repeatedly throughout the course of the research (Creswell, 2012; Saldaña, 2015; Yin, 2015). Throughout the course of the study, data were collected and simultaneously compiled and analyzed (Merriam, 1998). Yin (2015) proposes the analysis of data to take place using the phases of compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpretation, and concluding. This data analysis approach was utilized to identify emerging patterns and major themes that relate to the phenomena associated with this study (Yin, 2015). The five phases of qualitative analysis “do not follow a linear sequence, but have recursive and iterative relationships” (Yin, 2015, p. 184). This relationship caused analysis to go back and forth between phases of analysis at the same time (Yin, 2015). Data for this research study was analyzed using Yin’s (2015) five phases for data analysis.

A Computer Assisted Qualitative Database Analysis Software (CAQDAS) program produced by QSR International, NVivo™ (“NVivo qualitative data analysis software,” 2016), was used to help me organize my data, create memos and notes, create and retrieve codes, and explore the data entered. The use of NVivo™ program (“NVivo qualitative data analysis software,” 2016) was only used to help with the management and organization of the data and not with the interpretation or analysis of the data collected. Through the use of an integrated CAQDAS, the audio recordings of all interviews and focus group meetings were uploaded into the program that allowed me to personally transcribe and save the transcription with the audio file directly. I personally transcribed all interviews and focus group meetings from the audio and video recordings using my computer and the NVivo™ software program (“NVivo qualitative data analysis software,” 2016). All journal entries were already considered as transcribed due to the digital nature of each student’s entry (Creswell, 2012). Each student’s journal entries were also uploaded to the NVivo™ software (“NVivo qualitative data analysis software,” 2016) for further data analysis and coding. The compilation of all data within the NVivo™ software (“NVivo™ qualitative data analysis software,” 2016) program helped create an organized database that helped track all procedures.

I also audio recorded my reflections after each interview and focus group meeting that recorded notes of my personal thoughts, questions, or possible areas to pursue further. Each of these audio recorded reflections was uploaded into the NVivo™ software and transcribed (“NVivo qualitative data analysis software,” 2016). Writing of memos and journal reflections brought forth ideas and thoughts from data collected, but also helped to check any personal bias when analyzing the data (Yin, 2015). Schwandt (2015) identifies bracketing as a way to “suspend judgment about the existence of the world and ‘bracket’ or set aside existential

assumptions” (p. 22). Through the reflective journal process it allowed for a suspension of judgment or “bracketing” out my bias or previous assumptions (Schwandt, 2015).

Upon completion of transcription, a preliminary review of all data was conducted. This “preliminary exploratory analysis” (Creswell, 2012, p. 243) allowed for memoing of interviews, focus groups, and journal entries to occur and the identification of preliminary categories from these memos. The use of memos throughout the research helped “elaborate on ideas about the data and the coded categories” (Creswell, 2012, p. 438). Memos were my personal insights or ideas developed throughout the research and were considered a form of field notes (Yin, 2015). Creating a database, using the NVivo™ software (“NVivo qualitative data analysis software,” 2016), allowed me to compile the data collected and set the stage to begin disassembling and breaking it down into identified categories.

Once a database was formed after the compilation, transcription, and preliminary review, the next step was to disassemble the data into smaller pieces and begin in vivo and initial coding (Saldaña, 2015; Yin, 2015). “Coding is a procedure that disaggregates the data, breaks it down into manageable segments, and identifies or names those segments” (Schwandt, 2015, p. 30). The first level of coding I used was the in vivo coding method or exact words or phrases of participants rather than codes I personally created (Saldaña, 2015; Yin, 2015). For the first cycle of coding, the process of in vivo and initial coding was used (Saldaña, 2015). In vivo coding was utilized in order to maintain student voices and was done line by line using the process of splitting rather than lumping of in vivo codes (Saldaña, 2015).

During the disassembling process, analytic memos were kept in order to preserve ideas, thoughts and possible codes that were rejected and that could have been used for later recall when considering other possible codes during this phase (Saldaña, 2015; Yin, 2015). Writing

memos also helped to bring forth ideas and thoughts from each of the data collection processes that began to help identify new codes or labels (Saldaña, 2015). During the disassembling phase of analysis, codes began to move from concrete to abstract level two codes or categories (Saldaña, 2015). After initial in vivo coding, a second coding process, pattern coding, was used as a method “of grouping those summaries into a smaller number of categories, themes, or concepts” (Saldaña, 2015, p. 236).

The reassembling phase began the process of searching for patterns in the coded data that will eventually lead to the emergence of themes (Yin, 2015). During this phase of data analysis, Yin (2015) stresses the need for playing with the data using different mix and match arrangements until a pattern emerges from the data. Precautions were taken to mitigate bias in the analysis during the reassembling phase. Yin (2015) identifies the three procedures of making constant comparison, watching for negative instances, and engaging in rival thinking to help minimize bias.

Following the reassembling phase begins the interpretation phase of the data analysis or “giving your own meaning to your findings” (Yin, 2015, p. 220). This research utilized description as the mode of interpretation in order to best describe the phenomena that was studied (Yin, 2015). Tables were created to display the reassembled data that form the basis for the descriptive interpretation (Yin, 2015).

The final phase of analysis was to draw a conclusion that was “connected both to the preceding *Interpreting* phase and to a study’s main data or empirical findings” (Yin, 2015, p.235). A conclusion should capture the overall significance of the study and should not merely restate the findings (Yin, 2015). Yin (2015) has identified five possibilities for conclusions in qualitative research. The first conclusion is a call for new research, where a question has been

formed or suggestions for a specific method of research should be conducted (Yin, 2015). The challenge to previously held social conventions and stereotypes from prior research is another form of a conclusion (Yin, 2015). The third example of a conclusion in qualitative research is the “relevance and usefulness of new concepts and theories” (Yin, 2015, p. 238). A fourth conclusion is the generalization of the study’s findings to other studies not associated with the current study (Yin, 2015). Finally, Yin (2015) identified the last conclusion as one of taking action or an implementation plan from the research study.

The five phases of data analysis proposed by Yin (2015) were used for all interviews, focus groups, and journal entry data. All of the data collected was compiled into a database formed from initial coding, memos, and ideas from the preliminary review of the data. After compiling the data, it was disassembled into level one in vivo codes and initial codes that began to generate higher level codes or categories. Data was reassembled to identify emerging patterns or themes (Yin, 2015). Interpreting and a conclusion were developed from the identification of themes from the phases of data analysis. This data analysis process was reiterative in a back and forth process throughout the analysis phase (Saldaña, 2015; Yin, 2015). During the entire process, a data analysis software program, NVivo™ (“NVivo qualitative data analysis software,” 2016), was utilized for storage, helped in coding, and maintained my research notes, thoughts, and analytic memos throughout the data analysis phases.

Trustworthiness

The validation of the findings in this research will revolve around the accuracy and credibility of the findings and the interpretation of the data (Yin, 2015). Trustworthiness is the aspect of authenticating the study and the process that was taken to conduct the study (Yin, 2015). The approach to the study must be methodical, explicit, authentic and transparent in order

to build “a sense of trustworthiness about your research” (Yin, 2015, p. 83). Trustworthiness of the research adds value to the study and involves identifying the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the research (Creswell, 2012; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Schwandt, Lincoln, & Guba, 2007).

Credibility

Triangulation and member checking were used in order to establish credibility of the research (Creswell, 2012; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Triangulation of the data allows for an understanding or theme to be produced and for the corroboration of findings (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Creswell & Miller, 2000) from the interviews, journals, and focus groups.

In addition, to ensure credibility or validity of the study, member checking was used. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the use of member checks is “the most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314). Data that was collected and interpreted by me was taken back to the participants for review and confirmation. The use of member checking allowed me to view the results through the lens of the participant, including any final perspectives they may have in regard to the final data (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Dependability and Confirmability

An audit trail was utilized to address the dependability of the study and its findings. A clear timeline of data collection can be provided, along with my logs, personal notes, and memoing for future reference as a means of replication. A clear set of procedures for the collection of data were created to “ensur[e] that the process was logical, traceable, and documented” (Schwandt, 2015, p. 309). The process of creating an audit trail also enhanced the reflexivity about procedures throughout the course of the study. All interviews and focus group

interviews were audio recorded and transcribed, which increased dependability of the data. Adhering to the development of a database, disassembling, and reassembling of the data during analysis will increase the dependability of the study's findings (Yin, 2015).

The objectivity or neutrality of the study is once again addressed through the use of member checking, reflexivity, and triangulation of data (Patton, 2015; Schwandt et al., 2007). In addition to these procedures, I kept a journal throughout the process to chronicle the choices for specific selection of codes or other methodology decisions (Guba, 1981). All procedures allow for the participants' voices to be clearly identified without my personal interest or bias (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Transferability

The applicability or generalizability of the research was addressed using rich, thick descriptions. A rich, thick description provides sufficient detail allowing a vivid expression of the experience and placing the reader within the setting studied (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Guba, 1981; Schwandt et al., 2007). The use of transcription, memos, and field notes helped to develop a description of the interpretation of the circumstances and setting for the study (Schwandt, 2015).

Using a rich, thick description approach allows readers to "make decisions about the applicability of the findings to other settings or similar contexts" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 129). Therefore, using rich, thick descriptions allows readers of the study to determine if it is transferable to other settings (Creswell, 2013; Guba, 1981; Schwandt et al., 2007).

Ethical Considerations

During all phases of the study it was important to consider the ethical issues that may arise (Creswell, 2013). Participants in this study may have a sense of being labeled or a fear of

being labeled due to the nature of the study. If these labels are applied, then the study may create unintended responses from participants for fear of backlash from myself or school personnel. It was important to assign all participants a pseudonym to protect their identities when analyzing data. Anonymity and assurances of anonymity of the participants helped gather authentic responses from all participants.

All interviews and journal responses were done outside of the physical classroom and during students' free periods in their schedules. Interviews took place in a private location on the school premises. No observation of classroom instruction took place, which further minimized disruption to the school site. Focus groups took place after school and during school time, but working with the high school principal, helped to identify common time periods for most grade 12 students and helped minimize disruption to their class schedules.

A final ethical issue to consider was the sharing of student feedback during the data collection process. An agreement with the superintendent of schools and the school principals was signed to ensure the security of the data collection and findings. These agreements were shared with all student participants in order to help alleviate the possible fear of judgment from school personnel. The agreement does allow for the findings to be shared with all parties involved at the completion of the study, which will further allow for the anonymity of the participants.

All data collected was stored electronically and password protected for security reasons on my personal computer and external hard drive. Journal entries were placed in participant folders with assigned numbers and aliases and password protected. All files were stored on an internal and external hard drive, as well as backed up onto a third drive for safety purposes. All

three drives are password protected. All external hard drives are secured in a locked cabinet and off the school premises.

The site for this study received approval from the superintendent and the head principal. All students completed a combined consent form to participate in the study. All signed consent forms were scanned and electronically stored with the participant information and all hard copies were shredded. No participants were compensated in any way for their participation. All participation was voluntary and participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate students' perceptions of the impact of the Bible curriculum and the teachers' instructional delivery of that curriculum on grade 12 international school students at an open enrollment Christian international school in Asia. The intent of this research was to not address these perceptions or to change the current curriculum or teacher practices. My intent is to utilize the findings of this research to add to the collection of research and further advance the discussion of appropriate Bible curriculum for Christian international schools.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

This case study research explored grade 12 student perceptions of how the content of the Bible curriculum and the teachers' instructional delivery of the curriculum affected them as students. The focus of this chapter is to present the findings and results of the analysis conducted with the data collected from the individual interviews, focus group meetings, and weekly journal responses. This chapter begins with a brief discussion and demographic information of each student who participated in the study. Following the participant descriptions, results are presented according to the themes identified through the analysis process. Finally, the results are presented as they relate to the central research question and four sub-questions.

Participants

The participants in this research study were grade 12 students currently enrolled at a Christian international school within Asia. Thirty-three grade 12 students were contacted for this study, but only 18 students responded to the survey; six did not meet the criteria and were removed from further communication to obtain participants. Of the 12 remaining participants only seven responded to the follow-up email to schedule a first interview. Through the course of collecting data, one participant failed to complete journal entries and the final interview and was removed from the study. Adding more participants to this study from another school site in the region would not have met the requirements for participation in the study. Therefore, in total six participants completed the study, and the data collected and results of this study are reflective of these final six participants. All participants experienced the high school Bible courses at the same school, had the same teachers, and the number of years they have been at SIS varied with one beginning in grade 9 and another beginning in grade 4. Table 2 presents the participant

demographics in terms of gender, ethnicity, years at SIS, and how they self-identified as Christian or non-Christian. Each participant was given a pseudonym in order to maintain anonymity and each participated in all individual interviews, focus group interviews, and weekly journal reflections. The passport country was withheld to also further maintain the participants' anonymity. Participants are briefly described in the following narratives. It should be noted that all participant quotes that are included are verbatim, including any grammatical or spelling errors, to accurately reflect the participants' voice.

Table 2

Participant Demographics

| Pseudonym | Gender | Christian or Non- Christian | Ethnicity | Years at SIS |
|------------------|---------------|--|------------------|---------------------|
| Min-jun | Male | Non-Christian | Asian | 5 |
| Airi | Female | Non-Christian | Asian | 4 |
| Sara | Male | Christian | Caucasian | 7 |
| Joo-won | Male | Non-Christian | Asian | 7.5 |
| Karen | Female | Christian | Asian | 5 |
| Linda | Female | Christian | Caucasian | 9 |

Min-jun

Min-jun was brought up in a Buddhist home and, though he grew up in that environment, he did not believe in any religion and claimed to be atheist. Min-jun came to SIS in grade 8. As a new student at the school he was required to take an introduction to Bible class. This course is required for all new students who enter SIS at anytime during their secondary studies before taking other Bible courses. Prior to the introduction to the Bible course, his first introduction to Christianity was through elementary school friends in his home country. In his interview, Min-

jun expressed this initial exposure was “if you don’t believe in Christianity than you will go to hell or if you believe than you will go to heaven and you will be saved.” This negative feeling and sense of being forced was brought with him to SIS, but this initial concern changed over time.

His experience in the Bible classes was a positive influence on his life personally and challenged him to think about what he believed. His experience has been one of open mindedness after the initial Bible course, where he was exposed to a more solid understanding of Christianity. Through his exposure to the Bible and a variety of viewpoints Min-jun currently believes “someone superior has created the world, but I've never experienced anything closely about God” (First Interview). Therefore, Min-jun admittedly sees a change in his worldview perspective from what he thought he believed and what he currently believes, even if he is still reluctant to accept and believe in God or a religion.

Airi

Airi has lived outside of her home country for over 10 years, but came to SIS in grade 9. Airi stated that her parents were not Christians, but was told “it’s good to have something you believe in” (First Interview). Prior to coming to SIS Airi only knew generally that Christians existed, they believed in some God, and they had eternal life, but no specific details or stories of the Bible.

Airi was required to take the introduction to Bible course, which she considered her first true exposure to the Bible and Christianity. Airi is open minded about taking Bible classes and her mother was supportive yet cautioning her to not get too deep into Christianity. Through her initial introduction course Airi found the stories of the Bible and the concept of Jesus dying for her as interesting and challenged her to think. Her desire to understand more about the Bible or

Christianity has waned since that first introductory class though learning about other beliefs has allowed Airi to understand other view points and be more understanding of others' points of view, even if she disagrees with them. Several times Airi brought up that she sees God and Christianity as a positive and she knows how to become a Christian, but she still needs to see or experience something in her life in order to believe. During the final interview Airi revealed that information she shared from the introduction course with her mother caused her mother to personally seek and become involved in a Bible study group. Her mother is now more interested and active in pursuing God than Airi.

Sara

Sara has been at SIS for seven years, was raised in a Christian home, attended church, and went to Christian schools in her home country prior to arriving at SIS. Prior to entering Bible classes at SIS, Sara believed she had the Sunday school basic information, considered herself mature in her faith, but has seen her faith mature more since being at SIS. One of her biggest adjustments at SIS was being in a classroom environment with non-Christian students for the first time, which caused her to question why these students were required to take Bible class if they weren't Christians, because "that was the thing you did because you were a Christian" (First Interview).

Sara sees the Bible teacher as a person who is "second level down from my pastor" (Final Interview) or similar to a youth pastor whom students can go to for answers. She is unwilling to do so because of her lack of trust in some of the teachers because of her personal observations of the teacher's interactions with other students and actions outside of the classroom. Sara does not readily share with others her beliefs, but is more than willing to share or answer questions when others ask her. Sara's faith is challenged during times when she disagrees with the Bible

teachers' views or how they present Christianity to the class. When she is challenged in her faith, she sees a deeper impact and development of what she believes because it pushes her to research and study. Challenges to her faith have more often come from other subject areas, such as science and her study of evolution, causing her to dig deeper into her personal view of why she believes in creation. Sara sees that the challenging of her faith has only given her more support for what she believes and is needed for discussion with non-believers as her support is from a variety of resources, including the Bible.

Joo-won

Joo-won came to SIS at the beginning of second semester during grade 5. Since Joo-won came during elementary school, he was not required to take an introductory Bible class, but was immersed into Bible with the rest of the class. Joo-won grew up in an atheistic home that emphasized an obedience to parents, respect others, and “emphasized virtue and proper behavior” (Final Interview). Prior to taking the Bible classes at SIS, Joo-won only knew that the Bible was a book for Christians and heard a few Bible stories, but was not really aware of the religion. Initially he would disregard or not listen in Bible class, but during later years as he faced hardships he began to see the teachings of the Bible as a source of comfort and began to take an interest in who Jesus was.

Joo-won repeatedly stated his interest in the aspects of Christ and “whether Jesus really existed or not.” Learning about different aspects of Jesus challenged Joo-won in how he viewed the world and led to a change in his perspective of the world from one of being more self-serving more toward caring and serving others. He also does not see how it applies to his life and expressed the need for “more teachings that are related to our life instead of, instead of only teaching content in the Bible and analyzing it only in the perspective of the Bible” (Non-

Christian Focus Group). Joo-won has predominately viewed the Bible classes from a logical reasoning perspective that has challenged him to see things from others' points of view and to gain a factual knowledge of the Bible. This factual knowledge is considered a surface knowledge by Joo-won as he does not see himself capable of being a critical thinker when asked to further analyze the stories of the Bible.

Karen

Karen was brought up in a Christian home, going to church and Sunday school on a weekly basis. Her parents have been influential in teaching her Christian values and "raised me up to be Christian" (First Interview). She would say that she had more than a basic Sunday school exposure to the Bible and Christianity. Karen has been at the school for five years, beginning in grade 8. Due to her background, she expected to take Bible classes "because this is a Christian school and you kind of expect to take Bible classes" (First Interview). Though she had a Christian background she was required to take the introduction to Bible course during her first semester at the school as a new student.

Karen is reserved and not very willing to speak up in class to share her personal thoughts and opinions, but is more inclined to participate in smaller group discussions. Being challenged by other religious beliefs and other worldviews has allowed Karen to gather proof of why she is a Christian and believes in God. Karen believes factual knowledge or evidence is important to help prove something is true. This evidence allowed her to take a personal ownership of what she believed rather than relying on her parents or teachers for her belief. Her perception of her development is that "my worldview hasn't really changed, but I have gained more evidence... proof that Christianity is true so it has strengthened my worldview" (All Students Focus Group). She desires accountability or a personal connection with someone whom she can discuss her

struggles and meet on a frequent basis. She does not see the teacher as someone she can approach to discuss her struggles or ask questions with regard to her beliefs or about her struggles.

Linda

Linda has lived outside of her home country for 14 years and has been at SIS for the past nine years beginning in grade 4. She was raised in a Christian home and has only attended Christian international schools where Bible classes were mandatory. She would say her exposure, prior to SIS, was mainly Sunday school basics, Bible stories, and verse memorization. Coming to SIS and taking Bible courses was an expectation for her and “I didn’t ever really think about the fact that at other schools you didn’t take Bible classes” (First Interview). Her exposure to only Christian school learning also created a belief that everyone in her class already knew the Bible stories and “it was just something that you knew” (First Interview). It was not until later that she understood that not everyone knew this information and she never considered that the Bible was a new concept for some of her classmates.

Due to her upbringing, she would say “it was just a given” that she was a Christian, but in middle school she questioned her own belief. When taking the high school Bible classes, she was challenged to examine her stated beliefs. Linda stated, “it wasn’t just my Bible classes, it was more my other classes that kept providing evidence for it” (Final Interview), allowing her to make connections with what she believed to more confidently answer why she believed what she believed. Linda believes she can now answer why she believes in God, without relying on her parents or the fact that she was raised Christian, describing it as her own personal belief. Linda views the Bible classes as monotonous, believing she already knows the information, but continues to seek further evidence as to why someone should believe Christianity. The

connections she has made or discussed with other peers is what is most significant in her understanding of how the Bible relates to individuals personally. She desires to connect what she is studying with current societal issues and how to live out such principles from the Bible.

Results

The results for this research emanated from the analysis of individual interviews, focus group interviews, and student journal reflections. Data analysis informally began during the initial review of interviews and journals, while formal in vivo and initial coding began after all of the interviews were transcribed and the journal reflections were received from each participant. The process of compiling, disassembling, and reassembling of codes went through several iterations before five common themes or overarching themes emerged (Saldaña, 2015; Yin, 2015). These themes are (a) authentic learning, (b) interdisciplinary connections, (c) personal ownership, (d) teacher presence, and (e) tolerance.

Theme Identification

Collected data were analyzed using phases of analysis Yin (2015) describes as compiling, disassembling, and reassembling. All information was compiled and organized using QSR International's NVivo™ software program ("NVivo qualitative data analysis software," 2016), which allowed me to maintain all collected data in one location for coding and analysis in determining the themes.

Once all individual and focus group interviews were transcribed and journal responses were received from each participant, the first cycle of coding, the process of in vivo and initial coding, was used (Saldaña, 2015). In vivo coding was utilized in order to maintain student voices and was done line by line using the process of splitting rather than lumping of in vivo codes (Saldaña, 2015). Line by line in vivo and initial coding developed several hundred codes. Several

in vivo codes were similar between participants. They were combined into one code and either maintained one of the participant's in vivo codes or combined into an initial code that I created.

During the first cycle of coding, all codes were placed within one of the four research questions asked in this research. A fifth category was added called "out of class" where codes that were not specifically related to one of the research questions for this study were placed. After the first cycle of coding was completed the list of codes was exported from the NVivo™ software (2016) to an Excel™ document where I could see similar in vivo codes that needed to be combined because of either duplications or similar elements in the codes were missed in the initial coding.

I was very careful to merge codes that shared similar elements or student perspectives as I continued to reorganize, merge, lump, and at times relabeled the initial codes. As these codes were merged, a description was added to each code in order to maintain the reasoning for placing them together. After manually manipulating and moving the initial codes around in the Excel document and when I was satisfied with the reassembled list of codes, changes were made in the NVivo™ software (2016) to reflect the new list of codes. There were several reiterations of this same process to reduce the number of original codes, from over 500, to 77 in vivo and initial codes during the first cycle of coding.

A second cycle of coding, pattern coding, took place beginning with the 77 codes from the first cycle of coding. Pattern coding began by combining similar initial codes into broader categories, themes or concepts. Some of these pattern codes maintained the original in vivo statements, while others I created based on the concept of the codes being combined or after reviewing memos taken throughout the data collection and analysis process. During the second cycle, I also went through several reiterations of disassembling and assembling, until I believed I

had reached a point of not seeing any new patterns. The 26 pattern codes identified are displayed in Table 3 along with the number of references and sources coded for each pattern code.

Table 3

Aggregated Counts of Sources and References for Pattern Codes

| Pattern Codes | Number of Sources Coded | Number of References Coded |
|---|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Active learning | 20 | 95 |
| Authentic discussions (class or smaller groups) | 16 | 64 |
| Authentic participation | 16 | 69 |
| Care and service of others | 6 | 26 |
| Cautious about Christianity | 7 | 17 |
| Challenged to think | 21 | 60 |
| Changed behavior and actions | 14 | 43 |
| Classroom environment | 12 | 47 |
| Classroom Management | 9 | 22 |
| Content connections (Articulation and Personal) | 19 | 83 |
| Defined my personal view | 7 | 17 |
| Depth of knowledge | 6 | 11 |
| Embrace everyone/conflict avoidance (Tolerance) | 14 | 41 |
| Expected actions | 13 | 38 |
| Factual knowledge | 16 | 62 |
| Help me prove (Evidence) | 11 | 42 |
| Inherent morals | 13 | 20 |
| Interdisciplinary connections (subjects and personal) | 9 | 36 |
| Ownership of belief, faith, and worldview | 17 | 49 |
| Passive learning | 22 | 56 |
| Personal connection | 19 | 155 |
| Right to own belief | 8 | 16 |
| See other point of views | 9 | 20 |
| Spectrum of Christianity | 9 | 12 |
| Teacher qualities | 20 | 131 |

Throughout the process of this study I kept a notebook containing possible themes that I saw emerging from the first interview through the second cycle of coding. As the pattern codes were identified it became clear there were five themes that emerged from the analysis that identified student perceptions of the Bible class, the instructional delivery of the Bible class content, and their perceived learning or impact on their personal development. These five themes include: (a) authentic learning, (b) interdisciplinary connections, (c) personal ownership, (d) teacher presence and, (e) tolerance.

Table 4
Themes Developed from Pattern Codes

| Themes | Pattern Codes |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Authentic Learning | Active learning Authentic discussions (class or small groups) Authentic participation Passive learning Personal connection |
| Interdisciplinary Connections | Challenged to think Content connections (Articulation and Personal) "Depth of knowledge" Factual knowledge "Help me prove" (Evidence) Interdisciplinary connections (subjects and personal) See other point of views "Spectrum of Christianity" |
| Personal Ownership | Care and service of others Cautious about Christianity Changed behavior and actions Defined my personal view Inherent morals Ownership of belief, faith, and worldview |
| Teacher Presence | Classroom environment Classroom management Expected actions Teacher qualities |
| Tolerance | Embrace everyone/conflict avoidance (Tolerance) "Right to own belief" |

In order to ensure that these themes were accurate, the 26 pattern codes were linked with a theme. Prior to placing a specific pattern code with a theme, I reviewed all previous codes and data collected to ensure each fit with the theme in which it was linked. Each of the themes included a variety of patterns, which provided meaning to the themes allowing me to answer each of the research questions. The alignment of the pattern codes to the themes is displayed in Table 4. One final review of the data concluded that the coding was correct, the themes identified were accurate, and the conclusions were valid. The themes were consistent with the literature regarding student perceptions of teaching methods, personal learning, and moral and faith development, connecting the themes to each of the research questions. The following section provides a narrative of each theme supported by the appropriate data.

Authentic Learning. The theme of authentic learning developed from the pattern codes of active learning, authentic discussions, authentic participation, passive learning, and personal connections. Every participant discussed a variety of characteristics of authentic learning that they have experienced in the Bible classes. The theme is inclusive of the negative characteristics students expressed and the participants desire for a more active or engaged learning environment. Participants frequently described class as a passive rather than an active learning environment.

The variety of learning opportunities to actively engage with the content material at a meaningful level is important to each participant. Participants commonly described passive learning experiences as lectures or reading without discussion or personal application of the material. Sara pointed out that classroom instruction is often “teachers talking and then they tell us, do an assignment” (Final Interview). Linda, Min-jun, and Airi agreed that at times lecture is important, but Airi further commented that she needs teachers to give “personal examples or how they apply those stuff in their lives” (Non-Christian Focus Group). Min-jun felt that the teacher

needs to explain the meaning of the Bible because “if we don’t know the meaning of the Bible than I think reading the book is meaningless” (Final Interview). As a Christian, Linda knows the Bible is important and what the teacher is saying is in the Bible, but she doesn’t see how it “directly applies to us” from the class instruction (Christian Focus Group). During the weekly reflection, Min-jun learned and understood the Bible when he was “able to relate [it to] myself.” Airi sees the Bible as fiction and hard for her to believe because it is “not something we can actually see,” but does see the truth when others share personal experiences. Airi further stated that “I can't relate it to myself because I don't actually think that really relates to me” (Non-Christian Focus Group). Joo-won also does not see how the Bible relates, but would like “teachers to integrate our lives in the Bible teaching lessons, so that we can actually use those learnings in our life” (Non-Christian Focus Group). Each participant viewed an aspect of authentic learning as the ability to apply it to their lives or relating to the material being taught.

Staying actively engaged in the classroom was not just seen as class participation, but also through the projects, discussions, and other activities students engaged in during class time. Participants remembered more from previous classes when they were actively engaged in discussion, creating, or teaching the class. When the assigned reading for the week was the book of Job, Linda, a native English speaker, “didn’t understand most of Job’s conversations with his friends” and was hoping they would discuss it in class. Min-jun would have preferred to read the Bible and then have the teacher “make them present what they think the part of the Bible means” (Week 1 Journal). Sara would like to have a “worksheet to do during class” when teachers are lecturing that ask deep questions from what is being taught or “to do a presentation with a group cause then we can talk about it” rather than just listening to the teacher (Christian Focus Group).

Karen prefers class that incorporates a variety of learning practice as she communicated her experience from her junior year Parables class:

We read parables, we watched movies about parables, and made our own movie of a parable. And that kind of, like, brought the Biblical truth into what it would look like nowadays...it was more related, relative to our current time. (Final Interview)

Like Karen, Linda reflected upon the variety of learning from the grade 9 Book of Books class:

I remember more about Book of Books because he taught it in multiple ways. He gave us like documents to look at, videos, and he had us do like class discussions. So, it stuck with me more than if we would have if we just read a textbook or something. (All Participant Focus Group)

Joo-won also saw a more personal understanding of the material when in groups they “had to interpret them [Parables] in a modern perspective.” Not only did Joo-won learn from personally interpreting the Parable, but the groups had to make a video and watch all of the different groups’ videos in class together, followed by discussing “what the video was about and how we can relate it to our modern life” (Final Interview). Linda commented “that the best way to, like, learn something is to *teach it* [all participants said in unison]” (Christian Focus Group). Airi agreed that “when you have the responsibility to present to others you have to know everything, I think that will help you to understand the content better” (Final Interview). Sara wanted the teachers to “let the students teach each other the material and create presentations together summarizing each chapter that was being gone over that day” (Week 2 Journal).

Participation or discussion was important to the participants and was mentioned over 30 times in the data collected, yet as Joo-won noted the discussions are more often “superficial

thought” (Non-Christian Focus Group) or as Airi stated answering questions to “get stars to get a participation grade” therefore leading students to give the obvious answers for the grade rather than a true discussion. On the other hand, Linda sees that sometimes the teacher has “a specific answer that he wanted from you” rather than hearing what you might personally have to say about a question posed by the teacher. Min-jun concurred with Linda’s observation and even noted that students may not participate more because the teacher “whether it was homework or in class assignment he would just give us 100/100...even if it is unfinished then we just submit it, he will still give 100” (All Participants Focus Group).

The data ultimately provided a variety of authentic learning descriptors such as activities, presentation, teaching one another, presentations, group learning, personal application, and relating learning to their lives. Each of the participants desired and perceived authentic learning when actively engaged with the content, which is authentic learning at its best.

Interdisciplinary Connections. During data collection, I found that participants continually expressed the concept of connections in regard to the Bible content and courses. Participants desired to understand the connection between what they were doing in Bible and other subjects, rather than the Bible class as a stand-alone class. These areas included a connection to self or how content relates to them; connection with other subjects, evidence, and outside informational resources; connecting the Bible with religion; connecting the Bible classes from one year to the next; and finally, the disconnect students perceived in the curriculum.

Joo-won noted that he began to see how Jesus is viewed from a variety of viewpoints through the use of different videos in class, which brought further understanding and made “him [Jesus] a little bit more familiar person” (First Interview). Min-jun pointed out that “Christianity was a huge part of the history, and if the Bible teachers would, were able to, like, connect, make

connections (between) history and the Bible” (Non-Christian Focus Group) he would have a bigger picture of how the Bible fits into history. As Min-jun pointed out the need for further connections with history and Bible, Linda stated that “we have, like Church history, but I wish they'd like make more connections to other classes because it seems so isolated” (Christian Focus Group). Sara also saw the disconnect between Church history and other areas stating, “I guess it's interesting in a way and it's good to know, but I feel like in our Bible classes, maybe we shouldn't spend so much time on the denominations when they [non-Christians] don't even understand the root of it [Christianity]” (First Interview). On rare occasions, there are connections with other classes that are not intentionally planned, such as Linda experienced, “when I was taking Church history, art history, and world history at the same time, and I could make the correlations between the three” (First Interview).

Although she is a Christian, Sara was commonly thinking of her classmates and their views of making connections. She believes that students would benefit from connecting to other subject knowledge “because suddenly the thing that they knew, started corresponding with the Bible and kind of made them think that, oh, the Bible might be right” (Christian Focus Group). Min-jun also believes that connections are significant to keep students engaged because if “they don't have any relationship between the Bible and they don't have any common factors between the Bible, so it's easily to lose students to pay attention” (Non-Christian Focus Group). Joo-won feels that “sometimes Bible gets too abstract, so I sometimes don't understand what they are trying to say in the Bible” (All Participants Focus Group). He believes he would understand more if “Bible class more practical to our lives... give more explicit relationship with our lives and the Bible stories.” Airi sees the need for the same connection to herself to further her understanding because:

Hearing about the Bible story, in Bible class, it's like listening to a story for me. Because like I understand everything but I can't relate it to myself, so I'm still standing like from an outsider view to see it. (Non-Christian Focus Group)

If it is not connected to his personal life Joo-won believes “the only thing that I will get or receive from the Bible classes is just, like, deeper knowledge about the Bible” (Final Interview).

Sara also believes that if a connection between prior subject area knowledge and the Bible can be made, “people would be a lot more interested...rather than...just reading the Bible” (Christian Focus Group). Sara went on to further express an ideal class for her as:

Incorporating like science in the Bible... if there was a course incorporating philosophy, science, and Biblical stuff like in evidence to back the Biblical stuff and also going through how the Bible corresponds to science and how science actually comes from Bible stuff. Like that would be so cool, I would take that class in a millisecond (Christian Focus Group).

Linda pointed out that a connection with other subject areas may help the non-Christians because it helps them to see that “this does actually connect to me and here is evidence for it” (Christian Focus Group Interview). While Karen felt that evidence helped to further support what she believed because she could “see that there is evidence, it's not just from the teachers or it's not just from the Bible. But actually, there is evidence and there is proof that it is true” (First Interview). Karen explained “how science proves Christianity, not just like they're separate and you can't have one without the other and that's interesting” (Final Interview).

Most of the participants agreed that the knowledge they are learning needs to have a connection to modern times. Min-jun wants to “learn more about present time” (First Interview)

and how the Bible is connected to his present circumstances. Airi struggled with how the Bible applies to today because:

Now in present we don't see any of those...things that happened, that mentioned in the Bible. So, it's hard for me to believe it because, it's like really like a fiction story not like an actual something we can actually see. (Non-Christian Focus Group)

Airi recognizes that “if you don't use it in your real life then there's no point of...it's just like a knowledge that will be in your brain, but you will never touch on it” (Final interview). She further elaborated the need for teachers to focus on “how can a Bible concept help you to develop your life” and apply it to her current circumstances (Non-Christian Focus Group). Sara also sees the Biblical factual knowledge as important, but found that she was “not learning about God or I'm not learning about myself...something that I can take away more than just a story” (Final Interview).

Min-jun found it difficult to understand the Bible when teachers “have their individual opinions and their own individual views...if they were to talk about the same chapter of the book they would...give slightly different information to the students” (Non-Christian Focus Group). As a Christian, Sara found she “didn't agree with a lot of the teacher's views” (First Interview) and would share this with her classmates on how she disagreed with the teacher's interpretation or view on a topic discussed in class. Airi found that in class, “what has been mentioned in the Bible is really vague...it doesn't really give you an answer to, like a yes or no answer” (Non-Christian Focus Group) and she desires to have defined answers or specific guidance on how to apply what she is learning.

Most participants expressed that the content was repeated either too much within the same class or from one content course to the next. Min-jun knows that this could be minimized if

there was one Bible teacher for all the Bible classes, yet recognizes the infeasibility of that within a school. He also felt that teachers could have a meeting to discuss “what content should they be teaching this semester and then like make a connection so that a student can follow easily... so that it's more of connected Bible content” from one course to the next (Final Interview). Karen recognized the value in previously knowing many of the stories and believes she learned more when the story had a different focus from her previous exposure or she was able to go more in depth (Journal Week 1).

Students commented that the repetition of the content caused them to disengage during class in which they tended to “zone out.” Linda reflected that in class “we went over the same section multiple times” and if she were the teacher she “would have moved on quicker” (Week 2 Journal) to the next content. Min-jun found class to be boring because it “had too much repetition of contents” though he would state “reviewing is important” he saw that too much or “multiple revisions is considered unnecessary.” Sara also believes, “no one really pays attention because we go over the same content, over and over again” (Week 2 Journal). Like Min-jun and Sara, Linda believes too much repetition is boring and believes the teachers should give “the gist of every chapter” (Christian Focus Group) that highlight key points followed by specific examples of personal application, rather than repeating the entire chapter each class.

Some participants also noted what they see as a disconnect between the titles of courses and their personal expectations of the courses based on the titles. For his Wisdom Literature class, Joo-won “thought maybe they are teaching wisdom every class. But actually, we were just...talking about Bible chapters and analyzing the characters of the Bible. It doesn't really feel like it's wisdom literature” (Final Interview). Min-jun concurred that he:

Can't assume what's going to be taught in that class. As I said it's not connected, it's more of, this class should be teaching this and then like a huge gap between this lesson and then like it's going to teach other different contents. So, it's really kind of hard to guess what's going to be taught for next semester Bible class. (Final Interview)

The separating of the classes into specific topics did not enhance understanding for some students and lacked cohesion for them to see where the classes fit into the bigger picture of the Bible. Min-jun and Joo-won also struggled with identifying how the individual semester courses connected with one another. Joo-won sheepishly admitted that he did not know the order of the books of the Bible. Though Joo-won has taken great interest in learning about the life of Christ he was still unsure of the chronology of Jesus and how it fits in the bigger picture of the gospel. Like Joo-won, Min-jun knows there are two major parts of the Bible, but is still confused with the chronology or “how the story flows” (Non-Christian Focus Group).

Personal Ownership. The theme of personal ownership was derived from participant data that reflected their personal recognition of their change in actions, choices, decisions, or a change from being selfish to serving and caring for others. Some participants believe they have developed a further understanding of what they believe and why, which ties into the interdisciplinary connections as students found factual support for what they believe. It is not necessarily moving away from a previous belief, but it is more developed and they perceive they have the ability to further discuss or prove it with the evidence learned.

Linda became “confident in the fact that I have a stronger base...it's gone from being the way I was raised to being my own personal belief” (Final Interview). She believes that she has a more clearly defined worldview rather than just labeling herself Christian, because “through some of the classes I've learned to specify that, and recognize the fact that not all Christian

worldviews are going to be universally Christian” (Final Interview). Linda saw some Bible classes help her to support her beliefs as:

It made me mad that I didn't have an answer and I'm like I know there is an answer, but I just don't have it. But now I do have, I don't have all the answers, obviously...but at least I have enough to believe it for myself...they just kind of help me specify and define it.
(Final Interview)

Karen believes her “worldview hasn't really changed, but I have gained more evidence and more, ah, like, proof of like, that Christianity is true so it has strengthened my worldview” (All Participant Focus Group). Karen feels she has “more understanding of the Bible and that can help me have a firm foundation” (Final Interview). Karen also identified that she understood Biblical morals, but it was because of the classes at the school that she realized it was more than just “obeying the rule and not obeying the rule” (Final Interview), but rather a personal application of those morals to a variety of circumstances, such as the use of technology and searching websites. Through the process of applying her faith and taking ownership, Karen began to see:

It doesn't matter how rich or poor you are, you can still live your life for God and glorify him by caring for others around you and not just yourself... what material things I have and use them wisely and not just for myself. I shouldn't care about getting more and more things, I should focus on sharing what I do have and caring about others around me
(Week 1 Journal)

For others, the Bible class is a challenge to them as it contradicts what they believe or what they have been told by their parents. Min-jun finds that what he hears at home:

Casts doubts on the information that I learned from Bible class. And while taking Bible class I also cast doubt on the Buddhist religion itself. So, like, I'm, it's kind of hard to decide which one is the true fact and it's really like making me confused on like which religions are true. (Final Interview)

Though Min-jun is struggling to see which religion is true he still has “changed my worldview from atheist to deist...even though I'm not fully putting my faith to God, I still kind of believe that he exists and he has created the world” (Final Interview). Unlike Min-jun, Sara further developed her belief because she was exposed to non-Christians, she commented:

When I came here it was the like the first time I was ever around people who said they weren't Christians. So, it was like a new thing to like talk about the Bible with people who didn't necessarily agree. So, I think like in the long run it kind of strengthened my faith. (All Participant Focus Group)

Sara further expressed ownership of her belief, stating:

I can be comfortable in what I believe cause I know what I know, so it's like, not like a big deal if, like, I hear someone doesn't agree with it, cause it's like, I have a pretty solid foundation of what I believe now. (All Participant Focus Group)

She hears the variety of opinions and can take ownership for what she believes and takes the labels or judgment for her beliefs as something “that kind of comes with the package of being a Christian” (Christian Focus Group).

Airi believes she began to own her belief from the exposure to other views as she stated, “everyone has their kind of opinions and it's okay to, like, say something different than others. It's because everyone really do have different thoughts” (Non-Christian Focus Group). Unlike Airi, Linda believes that she must have answers for fellow Christians even though Christians

generally view things similarly she is challenged when “all the details get changed from person to person, not even from section of Christianity to section of Christianity, but just person to person as they view it differently” (Christian Focus Group).

Joo-won identified changes in his views of others, stating, “my worldview changed from like, um, detachment to others, to like more like caring and serving to others” (Final Interview), which he credits from studying the life of Christ. He explains:

When I heard that Jesus was really serving others and showed true love to others, even though some of them were the enemies. I realized I should at least try, at least attempt to follow his attitude not perfectly follow, but at least try to follow his behaviors. (All Participant Focus Group)

Airi sees how the Bible classes are helping her to identify her worldview, but also stated that “we're still shaping our worldview and everything, so they're teaching us what they think is true and right for us...I agree with most of the things, but just not believing” (Non-Christian Focus Group). Airi continued:

My worldview hasn't changed...but like it makes me think about like, Christianity more, and like, cause my morality was, is like pretty similar to what like the Bible is saying, so it, so it hasn't changed that much and I feel like I agree with what it's saying and it's been what I have been believing. I believe what the Bible says, but not the religion. (Non-Christian Focus Group)

Airi sees her morals as the same, values the teachings of the Bible, but also knows that “only if you apply in your life it's gonna help you” (Final Interview).

Airi noted that her morals are something she feels. When asked how she knows right from wrong she stated, “I'm not supposed to do. Cause I don't know; it just doesn't sound right”

(Final Interview). Like Airi, Sara said, “whenever I do something wrong, for me, I just feel like, really nauseous” (Final Interview). Joo-won found his view of right and wrong was based on his feelings stating, “when I feel guilty I know that is wrong. But when I feel a sense of, maybe, pride or happiness, then I think that's good” (Final Interview). In other words, he feels he “already had my values in my heart” (First Interview). Whereas Karen sees her morals as, “it's inside you, it's your conscience” (Final Interview). Linda further expressed the same idea as Karen, but made the connection to the Bible stating, “everyone has an internal moral compass called a conscience...it just so happens that that moral compass matches up really well with what the Bible says” (Final Interview). Joo-won recognized that the classes “influenced [him] unconsciously” (First Interview) and he saw his attitude and actions change towards others. Min-jun saw sin in his life, stealing, cheating, and lying, and made personal changes; “I got to think one more time before I acted out and it really, like, influenced my behaviors and my actions” (First Interview). Min-jun indicated a stronger impact on his moral standards, as he believes that in the “Bible there are like clear standards to how people should not sin, and which is sin” (Final Interview), but he does not believe in a religion or Christianity.

Teacher Presence. Teacher presence creates a host of multiple dynamics that work together to set up the class to be seen in the eyes of the participants as successful or as a failure. Participants commented on teachers’ behaviors, actions, and attitudes inside and outside of the classroom. How teachers communicate in the classroom, the clarity of their instruction, their sense of humor, and their classroom lessons were all mentioned to varying degrees by each participant. These characteristics contribute to the overall teacher presence and what students perceive as important in creating the proper dynamic for authentic learning.

Karen believes fun is a key to the teacher and “if you like the teacher, then you'll be inclined to, like, actually listen...and you'll actually want to talk and discuss the things” (Final Interview). I followed up with Karen asking, what it is to like a teacher, and Karen stated:

They know when to, like, have fun, or when to actually, when to teach and be serious.

And also, they, they don't just teach all the time. They show like other things, videos, or they talk about their lives. (Final Interview).

Joo-won agreed that teachers need to be fun, but also “sometimes have a sense of, like, humor” (Final Interview) and be “caring for those students” (Final Interview). Linda believes that teachers “have to believe what they are teaching...they should be enthusiastic about it...if you’re not enthusiastic about the subject you’re teaching, you shouldn't be teaching it” (Final Interview).

Not only are teachers to be fun, but Airi believes “when teachers talk about something personal, it gives me a better understanding and, like, I'm more convinced of how God is working in people” (First Interview), adding, “if the teacher can, um, say something that happens in their life, then it's more relatable and we might think about it deeper” (Final Interview). Airi revealed that “when teachers give their personal examples or how they apply those stuff in their lives. It like helps us understand better, than just giving us a lecture on the content about the Bible” (Non-Christian Focus Group). Like Airi, Linda was caused to think about God’s plan for her life because the teacher shared “a story about one of the teacher’s friends” (Week 1 Journal).

How the teacher communicates with the class influences the student perception of the teacher and content. Min-jun believes how things are presented, is what turned him away from listening to the teacher. He shared when the teacher communicated in an insulting tone that “Christianity is not a religion, it's truth” (Non-Christian Focus Group) he was insulted and it

caused him to switch off from further engaging in discussion in the class. He expressed that the tone of voice used created a perception that the teacher was “kind of like force students to believing in Christianity” (Final Interview). Min-jun also related how he appreciated a different teacher’s approach to presenting the information because the teacher was “respecting other worldviews also, but [the teacher] thinks that Christianity is the one that’s really relying on the truth” (First Interview). He further went on to say that the teacher “said everything can be true, and if you think your stance is true, you should also respect other people’s stance too...I think it really depends on the teachers’ attitude” (First Interview).

Sara noted that when a teacher “sounded really harsh to me” (First Interview) she would stop listening and feel the need to share with her classmates a different Christian perspective. She also stated that at times she would feel the need to defend the non-Christians when a teacher made the statement “you’re stupid if you don’t believe in Jesus” (Christian Focus Group). Linda noted that the teacher sometimes “goes off on rants” (All Student Focus Group) about specific topics without allowing the student to have a different opinion. Sara agreed and stated that some teachers are “narrow minded” (Christian Focus Group). She explained how she wants to engage in discussion with her classmates and the teacher, but doesn’t because the teacher goes directly to why the view shared by the student is wrong. Karen agreed and added how helpful it was for teachers to give students the opportunity to share their views and leave it open for discussion, rather than going into why it is wrong at that moment (Christian Focus Group). Min-jun expressed it is difficult to discuss when the teacher said, “he is not going to be biased about his, about these diverse religions” and then proceeds to tell students that “this is wrong, and that’s wrong...in his own opinion, and not respecting others’, like worldviews” (All Participant Focus Group). Joo-won noted that a teacher is “going to say something stimulating” (Final Interview)

to create a question to show a student why they are wrong. Linda agreed and believes that when a student brings up a valid question “the teacher should try to address it from a more objective perspective” rather than beginning the answer with “you could look at it that way, but it's **obviously** [student emphasized] not right...it shuts the student down...that makes them not want to talk about it anymore” (Christian Focus Group).

Karen expressed that a teacher says, “I don't want you to say what you think I want to hear” (Christian Focus Group), but the teacher “said that, but they didn't mean it” (Christian Focus Group). Sara agreed and noted “his actions didn't match his statement” (Christian Focus Group) or as Linda commented about a teacher “he had a specific answer that he wanted from you,” rather than your own personal answer or viewpoint (All Participant Focus Group).

Linda noted that sometimes statements are made unintentionally by teachers that shut down a classroom conversation, but then other times, teachers are quite intentional about what they are saying, appearing to students that the teacher is being defensive or offensive to the students (Christian Focus Group). Sara remarked that at times the teacher can get defensive when “anything is brought up against the Bible or any kind of, like, touchy topic,” and Linda elaborated that “it's not even against the Bible, it's just against his worldview” (Christian Focus Group). Min-jun expressed his opinions through journal responses and found that “I wrote it in my personal view and it wasn't definitely on a Christianity value, but he still, um, appreciated and he thought that it was still a valuable answer” (Non-Christian Focus Group).

Most participants discussed teachers' actions and how they perceive a disconnect between Christianity and the teachers' actions. Sara recalled a time when the teacher was describing the attributes of a Christian and it led to further discussion with her peers outside of class. She noted that her friends were questioning the actions of Christians by saying “if that's

what a Christian should be...then aren't Christians just like hypocrites...what's the point of being a Christian if they're like, exactly the same as me or worse" (All Participant Focus Group). Airi believed that Christianity was "the Bible (says) don't do this, don't do that," which caused her to question the actions of Christians. Through discussion with others she realized that "everyone's not perfect, at least people should try to be, like, follow what the Bible says, like if they're basing their morality on it" (All Participant Focus Group), but that even Christians are not perfect.

Sara found that teachers "say that they're Christians, but then act differently, or act kind of confusingly" (Christian Focus Group). Linda believes, even outside of class, teachers can "kind of get really heated if someone asks a question that's against Christianity" (First Interview), adding that "they need to not feel so, like, attacked, when, like, someone's asking a question that's not necessarily agreeing with what they're talking about" (First Interview).

A few participants had higher expectations for the Bible teachers. Sara views the Bible teacher as someone:

You should be able to tell they're a Christian...I want to be able to see, not see Jesus, but like, see them trying their best to like emulate what a Christian should be, because like, that's important, like he's the Bible teacher. (Final Interview).

Sara also sees the Bible teacher as "second level down from my pastor" (Final Interview). She expressed she sees the Bible teacher as someone "I look to...for an example and I look to him to give me answers" (Final Interview). Unlike Sara, Joo-won noted that "I don't know Bible as much as the teachers do" (All Participant Focus Group); therefore, he defers to their judgment and expertise in the field.

Min-jun views Christianity as "really about how you really put faith in Christianity and how you act or like are like truly acting cause you're a Christian" (First Interview). During the

course of this study students were studying the book and life of Job in Bible class, and Airi questioned “does all Christian can act like Job when they have nothing left” (Week 1 Journal)? She noted that what she was reading in Job and trying to apply it to current situations appeared to conflict with the actions of Christians around her.

As a Christian student, Sara felt that “the teachers, they kind of expect more of me because I’m a Christian,” and because of this expectation, she has “had so many, just like, one-on-one talks with teachers because I disappointed them” (Christian Focus Group). Karen agreed with Sara, but stated “I also know that being a Christian doesn't mean you have to follow every rule all the time, like, be a rule follower, cause that's kind of like being a people pleaser” (Final Interview). Linda feels that teachers are more critical of her as a Christian. She stated, “they watch your behavior more, and kind of expect more from you...and you’re supposed to be a good sport and a good example...expect(ing) you to be the one to answer the questions” (Final Interview). She also believes that as a Christian with a Bible background the teacher has a greater expectation of her engagement in the classroom. She noted that:

Kids with the Bible background in the class, if one day you’re not really answering questions, the teacher will sometimes call on you directly and be like don't you know the answer, kind of thing. Whereas the other kids who don't have Bible background, the teacher, like they could not answer questions for the entire week and the teacher doesn't ask them directly necessarily. (Final Interview)

Sara also perceives that teachers think they have a close relationship with her because she is a Christian. She states, “if I don't have a relationship with you...I don't really think you have a place to, like tell me what I'm doing wrong or right with, like my faith and my walk” (Christian

Focus Group). Sara sees the need for accountability in her life, but within relationship, which she would say does not exist with her Bible teachers.

The general structure and organization of the class, whether it is the type of environment, the organization of the teacher, or the feedback received was important to the students. Joo-won found that when class was “a free environment...[not] strict, or like, too studious environment,” but comfortable was when he could easily understand what was being taught (Final Interview). Joo-won believes that in a relaxed class it allows him to “focus more,” while other classes were “strict on his way of teaching...he mentions unrelated contents” (Final Interview). Sara agreed with Joo-won, and believes that classes where she didn’t “feel any tension...makes people feel, like, comfortable... it's not an uncomfortable place...like [another class is] very uncomfortable for everyone” (Final Interview). Since each class is so different, Sara feels that “there’s [not] any class right now that’s just a happy medium area” (Final Interview) that is conducive to sharing freely.

When teachers have procedures in place, the student is more likely to follow the pattern and have a better understanding of what to expect. Min-jun liked when a teacher had a system of “volunteering and giving participation grades,” but also felt the teacher “was able to manage his students well to participate and concentrate in his topic of his teaching” (Final Interview). Through the structure of the class, Min-jun believes he could maintain focus and stay engaged in the class content. Like Min-jun, Linda would like to have more structure within her classroom. She noted that when there are distractions in class the teacher has to “repeat the information because they'd didn't get it the first time” (Christian Focus Group).

Joo-won likes knowing the direction the class is headed each day and finds it is important. He noted that in some classes he “didn't know what we were doing in that class” or

what the main point was to be, while he was more successful in classes where the teacher “tells a story and in the last five minutes he tells us the point of his whole class every time (Final Interview). Joo-won realized that when the teacher concluded the lesson with the main point it allowed him to be more confident when he would review his notes later. Like Joo-won, Karen found it was helpful when the teacher “writes down on the board, then [we are] supposed to write it down” (All Participant Focus Group). Linda believes that some classes need lecture, but that it “could only takes like 5-10 minutes at the very beginning of class. And then you do work...[and] discussions. (Christian Focus Group)

Class assignments and projects were often confusing for the students as to the connection with what they were learning. All the participants believed that doing projects was beneficial to their learning, yet, believed the time allotted for the presentation was not always sufficient. As Sara stated, “he did make us do presentations, but it was like he would give us the topic and then 10 minutes to make it, and present it in that class” (Final Interview). She believed that the assignment was a good idea, but the amount of time did not allow for much critical thinking to discuss or dig deeper into the topic. Airi expressed that some assignments were not “meaningful...I feel like there really wasn’t a point to that” (First Interview). Sara found the assignment to be “busy work” and stated, “I don’t think he checked the assignment” (All Participant Focus Group). Like Sara, Min-jun believes that “one of the problems with his class was that he just gave all 100s on every single assignment that he gave” (All Participant Focus Group). Joo-won agreed with Sara and Min-jun, but appreciated that the Bible teachers “made sure we were not too stressed out with our grades...they were more lenient on us than other classes” (Final Interview).

A final aspect of teacher presence is the importance of feedback. Students seek feedback when they do engage in discussions or questions in class. Joo-won believes he stops participating at times because:

The teachers are not taking [my responses] much seriously, compared to the, like, students who are really passionate about the Bible, like, for example, when I throw some answers out some teachers might just nod and just respond by saying “yeah.” But other students who are actually throwing out, like, really thoughtful answers, they are, the teachers continue by asking questions about the response the students gave. (Joo-won, Non-Christian Group)

Min-jun’s feedback toward his questions or answers “would be ignored by the teacher” or teachers would give a simple answer such as, “okay, you did a good job, and then just simply going over quickly to other students” (Final Interview). This type of feedback gave Min-jun the sense that his comments were not valued by the teacher and he would refrain from further participation. Airi felt that “when a teacher gives a few comments on it...or if he starts elaborating on the topic” (Final Interview) is when she feels her participation is valued and is more inclined to stay engaged in the discussion. Karen participates out of obligation as she states, “I just either answer the questions or add a comment to what I think is interesting. And usually the teacher appreciates, cause most people are quiet” (Final Interview). However, to the students it is obvious when teachers like the students’ questions, because they expound upon it with the class or further engage in the question. This feedback was important for students in creating the environment needed for authentic discussion or dialogue.

Tolerance. The theme of tolerance is not as extensive as the other themes, but was of significance when considering the research study and students’ personal development. The theme

of tolerance is an aspect of critical thinking and creating an environment that allows for free thought and sharing without conflict, or as Joo-won stated, “embrac(ing) everyone” (First Interview). Some participants described how learning about other worldviews and religious beliefs in Bible class has personally helped them to be more tolerant. Sara stated:

Before I just like assumed everyone knew who God was...but then I started meeting people who don't and started seeing why they think that and then I think that expanded my view on their view... it helped me learn how to interact with people. (Final Interview).

Airi is “more acceptable of other beliefs” (Final Interview) because of what she has learned in the Bible classes. Like Sara and Airi, Karen noted “I see it from their perspective and you interact differently... even though they are wrong” (First Interview). She knows that other beliefs are wrong, but wants to understand the other perspective before engaging in a discussion. Whereas, Joo-won said that he “tried to be tolerant with others...and I tried to embrace everyone” (First Interview).

Each participant agreed that everyone has the right to their own belief even if they disagree with someone else. Linda explained that she is:

More conscious of what they believe and that not everyone agrees with me...it made me think about the fact, you know, we could be wrong. I don't think I'm wrong, but you know other people think I am. So just take that into consideration and not necessarily be as hard or as pushy about what I believe in because it must be right because to other people it's not. (First Interview)

Min-jun believes that “there should not be any rights or wrongs in religions or their beliefs or their worldviews...cause everybody's different and everybody has their own beliefs and their

faith” (All Participant Focus Group). Linda added that, “I can talk about other religions, but I don't have to talk about them like they're wrong, even if I think that I don't have to talk about it like that” (All Participant Focus Group).

Other participants referred to the idea of respect also as a form of tolerance. Airi discussed how she is “more open to different beliefs” and further expressed that everyone is different and has the right to believe what they want and she “wouldn't mind if other people are acting different, like different from me, cause it's not my business” (Final Interview). Min-jun believes that tolerating other views is a form of respect. He stated:

People tend to think Christianity is the only right thing and they disrespect other people's point of view... cause people have the right to believe their own views and it's not one of the things you can take away from others... people shouldn't disrespect or think they are the only one that's right. (First Interview)

He further believes that it is important for teachers and students to “respect other worldviews,” even if they think one is right or the truth over all others (First Interview). Joo-won is more introspective and reflected that he will often “think how my words will impact others’ feelings” (Final Interview) and if he is respecting others views during discussions.

Like Min-jun and Joo-won, Linda and Sara believe that respecting others’ opinions is important, but further expressed their belief that relationships do not need to be cut off because of opposing beliefs. Linda stated, “I can believe one thing and you can believe another and that's a disagreement. But I'm not opposed to it, I'm not, like I can't believe it, I can't even talk to you” (Christian Focus Group). Sara also reflected that “a lot of times when they [peers] disagree it seems like they don't like the person” (Christian Focus Group).

If Bible classes were not taught at the school Airi believes “people won’t be as accepting” (First Interview). Joo-won thought that acceptance was “respect[ing] others by not saying what they do not want to hear” (Joo-won, First Interview). Unlike Airi and Joo-won, Sara believes that she “should interact with someone who doesn’t necessarily agree with my views” without being “pushy.” She also knows that Christians should be “unapologetic about what they believe,” but in a manner that is not mean or condemning of others’ beliefs (First Interview).

Not only are students looking to accept others by hearing and listening to others’ views, but they also want it to be reciprocated. Linda doesn’t mind sharing her view and does not mind if others disagree, but she is “worried that if I share my viewpoint, they’re just going to completely shut it down... then not even listen to my reasoning behind it” (Final Interview). It is a two-way road of sharing and respect, as Min-jun stated, “it’s really important to respect each other and, like, not try to insult other people. Be the most considerate parts when I talk with my peers” (Final Interview). Sara expressed her confidence in sharing her beliefs and her peers will engage her in discussion because “they know I am secure enough in what I believe that I won’t get upset from them questioning me” (Final Interview).

It is not a common practice for students to share their views outside of the classroom and, often, within the classroom setting. Karen stated, “if someone were to ask me or something then I will share, but...I won’t initiate a conversation” (Christian Focus Group). Outside of the classroom Airi commented “students, we don’t really talk about religion” (Non-Christian Group) and Joo-won wants to avoid conflict stating he “just accepts any views and simply take down notes about what the teachers are saying...we are not going to reject anything that’s taught by the teachers who have different perspectives” (Non-Christian Group).

Research Question Results

The central question for this research study was: How does the students' perception of both the content of a Bible curriculum and the teachers' instructional delivery of that Bible curriculum affect students at an open enrollment Christian international school in Asia? Four sub-questions were developed that support the central question. This section presents answers for each of the sub-questions, which combine to provide an answer to the overall central question for this research.

Sub-Question 1. How does grade 12 international school students' prior knowledge of the Bible or Christianity impact their perceptions of a Christian international school's Bible curriculum? Two aspects of prior knowledge became intertwined in this research: (a) prior knowledge before entering the school, and (b) the prior knowledge students held before each new class every semester. Those students who were raised with the Sunday school stories and influence of Christian parents perceived all the classes as something that was expected of them to take. Students who came from a non-Christian background had limited exposure to Christianity and the Bible prior to taking Bible classes at the school.

The participants who came from a non-Christian background found that prior knowledge is a significant advantage in understanding the content of the high school Bible classes. Most of these students were required to take an introduction Bible class when they first came to the school; some took it in high school and others in middle school. If students entered the school in an elementary grade, there was no introductory class, but rather just normal immersion with elementary instruction and learning. Entering the school after elementary school, the introductory course helped provide all students a general understanding of the Bible and Christianity, whether they had knowledge of Christianity or not. This included students who

were skeptical because of previous interactions with Christian friends in their home country. The need for prior knowledge or an introduction to the Bible was necessary for those students who had no background knowledge. Once they had this initial introduction, it made the future courses a bit easier to understand and follow. Airi found that the new content intrigued her, but over time this excitement for the new faded. Min-jun and Joo-won found that what they previously knew from friends was inaccurate and this introduction course helped to correct that view. This correction allowed new knowledge to be developed and helped them as they took other courses.

Christian students also found that their background and prior knowledge of the Bible was necessary for a deeper level of learning needed in the high school classes. Their knowledge allowed them to, at times, personally engage with the material at a more analytical or higher level than those with less prior knowledge. All three Christian participants found that their prior knowledge enabled them to challenge teachers' views or personal application of Scripture more than if they did not have the previous background. This ultimately influenced their view of the teacher, impacting their perception of the class because of the teacher rather than content. Due to their prior knowledge, they all found themselves helping all their classmates understand the Bible by re-teaching or explaining what the teacher discussed in class at a more personal level for students to understand. They found themselves clarifying for others what the teacher meant and answered questions students were not willing to ask the teacher in class. At the same time these students found that they often got bored more quickly in class, zoned out, and could easily answer questions without much thought. Though the prior knowledge was needed, they desired to build upon it with new knowledge at a deeper level of learning. At the same time, they saw that prior knowledge was needed for all students to take the Bible classes in the high school.

From the data collected, students saw the need for prior knowledge to take the courses, but it also became apparent that some of the prior knowledge learned was not being used in the next level of courses. Many of them could not remember what Bible classes they had taken during high school and had to be reminded of the course titles by me during each interview session. Therefore, much of the knowledge was a short-term learning rather than long term knowledge, which may be a result of the lack of authentic learning taking place within the classroom. Students also recollected more when things connected personally to them or to something that was of a more interdisciplinary connection. Accessing preexisting knowledge, whether in science, history, or art class, helped students to utilize the knowledge and build upon the knowledge learned in Bible.

All the participants stated it was important to have at least a foundational knowledge of the Bible and Christianity for the high school Bible courses. The amount of time each participant was enrolled at SIS contributed to their prior knowledge of the Bible. The further removed a student was from their first Bible class the more difficult it was to remember the initial impact of the Bible. But even with prior knowledge they were not able to always connect actual content knowledge from one Bible class to the next. Thus, actual content knowledge did not impact their perceptions of Bible courses, as much as other factors.

Sub-Question 2. How do the high school Bible classes at a Christian international school impact the perceived moral, faith, and worldview development of grade 12 international school students? The theme of personal ownership reflects the views of students' moral, faith, and worldview development. Students identified that they have further developed or defined their belief and worldview through a deeper understanding of what they believe and why. But it is not necessarily a moving away from a previously held belief, but rather a more profound

development of their faith and worldview. The perception is they have the ability to discuss or prove their beliefs with the evidence learned from the Bible courses. Their personal ownership also influenced some students perceived moral development based on the choices or change in behavior they related during their interviews. They also began to see what they believe as their own and not something that is from the school, teacher, or parents. Even if it is the same as their parents or teachers, they still have identified their own personal view of what they believe and taken ownership of why they believe what they do.

Min-jun and Joo-won both believe that, even though at first, they were reluctant to take the classes, they see the benefit to themselves personally. Min-jun has seen a change in his worldview perspective and now believes that a supernatural being, or God, does exist, even if he does not believe in Christianity. Min-jun perceived this change as a worldview shift, but not a faith or a religious belief, as he still firmly does not believe in religion. He also saw a distinct difference in his choices and behaviors because of the Bible classes and learning to understand more about the morals and the concept of sin. Min-jun was clearly able to see that he was developing a sense of what was right and wrong personally through his discovery of his worldview and moral development.

Joo-won saw his morals change more than a faith or worldview change because he saw a distinct change from being selfish to more of a desire toward serving others, as well as thinking of the effect his choices have on others, as well as himself. His personal worldview change would be his ability to see other perspectives, but ultimately it was his moral choices he observed that changed the most through the Bible courses. Airi identified that her morals were like the Bible and so she did not see a change from what she believed prior to the Bible classes. Though she saw her faith begin to shift in her earliest Bible classes, with an initial interest in the Bible,

she at one point thought she would believe. However, she does not believe in God and still holds that she may one day believe, but could not make that decision because she wanted it to be true and not something she just said to fit in. Sara, Karen, and Linda found that their faith was more firmly supported due to the evidence provided in the classes and they now hold a deeper understanding of their belief, but ultimately their faith in Christ did not change. Sara, Karen, and Linda also believe that their faith was no longer because of their parents, but rather one that they now feel responsible for and personally own.

Though each of them sees a different perspective on how their faith developed, they all personally own what they believe and don't feel obligated to believe something to "fit in" at school or with their peers. Participants have developed a sense of respect and tolerance for other viewpoints. Each is cautious when sharing their own views as they want to avoid conflict, avoid hurting others, and remain tolerant of other opinions, faiths, and beliefs. Each participant is confident in what they believe, but are also open minded enough to listen to others' beliefs, if they can share and not feel attacked when they share. The participants have been challenged in their moral, faith, and worldview development when asked difficult questions, though only when done in a manner that does not cause conflict or disharmony. When they are challenged to think, and hear other views, each of them expressed times when, even if they didn't agree with the others' views, it forced them to consider why they didn't and to dig deeper for their own personal answers. Ultimately, they believe everyone has the right to believe what they want without judgment, but they still have a view of what is right and wrong for themselves personally.

Sub-Question 3. How does a Christian international school teacher's instructional delivery method in a Bible class impact grade 12 international school students' perceptions of the Bible curriculum, and their moral, faith, or worldview development?

Collected student data involving the teacher and instructional delivery methods revealed several important themes including authentic learning, interdisciplinary connections, and teacher presence. It was often noted by participants that it was not usually the content, but rather the teacher who impacted their personal development.

Participants' perceptions of the teacher influenced their view of the content, but more importantly their desire to engage in the content during class. A teacher was considered effective when they communicated clearly the meaning of the Bible and created an environment that actively engaged students with the content in a meaningful way. The teacher created a classroom that was not too strict and not too laid back, but more importantly the teacher allowed for views other than his own to be shared and discussed. Min-jun and Sara related that teachers may allow you to share your thoughts, but would often tell you why students' views were wrong, rather than allowing for free or open discussion. The teacher presence in a classroom impacted the environment and influenced their instructional delivery. Participants learned not to share their opinions or views when in some teachers' classes, while in others they knew it was safe to share and get valuable feedback from classmates and the teacher in those moments.

How the teacher presented the material was also reflected in the tone, facial expressions, and mannerisms and gave participants the sense of both positive and negative feedback. Sara found the tone of voice used by a teacher very sarcastic and condescending toward all other religions or worldviews, except Christianity, created a non-participatory class environment. Min-jun indicated that when he sees this in teachers he decides not to share his opinion, loses confidence in the teachers' ability to remain open minded, and is offended by statements rather than challenged to think. A teacher's ability to create an environment that students are willing to share in revolves around how they interact with students.

Authentic learning for students requires meaningful participation or more active learning, rather than passive learning. Min-jun and Joo-won often identified that it was important for them to understand the meaning of a Bible passage being studied if they were expected to analyze or apply the material. Airi often found that assignments or projects were not connected to the material and were not meaningful. Each of the participants commented on the amount of reading and lecture that occurs during class time, both of which were passive learning methods.

Participants indicated that they want to be more engaged in their learning. Linda sees this engagement through the classroom lesson planning and structure of the classroom, the idea of chunking out class time so that one is doing something different during the class to utilize a variety of learning strategies, keeping everyone active and engaged with the material. Sara believes the best way to learn something is by teaching the material, either individually or in groups. Airi sees the advantages of group work and developing a presentation for the class, but only if it is meaningful and connected to the topic.

Being actively engaged with the content not only applied to how the teacher presented the material, but the content itself. Karen would like to see teachers utilize a variety of methods to teach Bible content, incorporating other disciplines into the topic so that they are making connections with other subject matter. Participants also recognized that a teacher's personal stories as part of the instruction is helpful to see application of the content or how it personally relates to them. Sharing of personal accounts, by teachers or students, helps participants connect with the content and think about the direct impact on them personally.

All the participants found that if they could connect the Bible to another subject they already knew, it would help them develop a stronger perspective and personal connection to what was being taught in Bible. Min-jun sees Bible as something that is unrelated to other

subjects, so making a connection would help him to see the bigger picture of how the Bible relates. Participants were more excited and expressive when communicating learning experiences that connected a topic to outside material, which further gave evidence for Biblical topics being discussed. Often, this evidence was not from the Bible or the teacher, but outside perspectives and documents students could engage with and discuss in class.

Strategies allowing students to actively interact with the content, making a connection to other subjects, and relating personally to themselves had greater impact on their moral, faith, and worldview development than just teacher driven instruction.

Sub-Question 4. How does an international school students' family background impact their perceptions of the Bible or Christianity and their moral, faith, or worldview development?

Participants recognized the role their families played in their moral, faith, and worldview development and this background impacted their view of Bible class to a certain extent. All the participants recognized that their moral development of right and wrong was initiated by their parents. Each time they were asked what was right or wrong, it often began with what my parents taught me or it is something that they just inherently know. These inherent morals are reflected in the personal ownership theme, and even though they see it as something they have always known, there is a parental connection each returns to when discussing right and wrong. Although they may rely on their parental foundation for their morals, the Bible courses and Christian principles taught either have added to what they previously believed to be right and wrong, helped them gain a better understanding of why they believe what they do, or it allowed them to take a personal ownership of what they believe rather than being dependent upon parents' beliefs.

When it came to faith development, Min-jun, Airi, and Joo-won, all Non-Christians, voiced a warning from their parents to be cautious about Christianity. These cautions caused a conflict of learning for some participants between what the family said and the Bible teachers said, but ultimately did not disengage them from learning. Min-jun experienced this disequilibrium when his parents said Buddhism was the truth and his teachers said the Bible was the truth. This conflicting view allowed Min-jun to pursue what he sees as truth and in the process personally found that he believes there is truth in both. At the same time, he broke with his parents' beliefs and found that he personally believes there is a God, but not in Christianity.

Airi's parent cautioned about going too deep into Christianity because a person should not rely solely on God to do the work. Her parent expressed the desire for her to work hard and if she went too deep with God, then she would rely on him and not have to do anything. Even though she was cautioned by her parent, Airi initially found the Bible to be interesting and it made her think about what she believed. After a period of time this novelty wore off for Airi personally; however, her parent became more interested in Christianity. While Joo-won came from a non-Christian background, his parents believed that he should find a religion that was right for him and they were fairly open minded. Even though Joo-won came from a more open minded background, he still adhered to a traditional filial ethic of obedience to parents, following his parents' rules, as they were very strict with their child. Despite obedience to his parents, he found his choices and decisions were selfish, and through the study of Jesus' life he realized the need to respect others, serve others, and care for others.

Sara, Karen, and Linda all grew up in Christian homes and, rather than being cautious toward Christianity, they faced the expectations of being a Christian because of their family. Throughout the course of the interviews, they all acknowledged at some point that they just said

they were Christians because of their parents, but were not sure what that meant for them personally. At one point, Sara mentioned she was not a Christian because she was not sure what that meant to her personally, which initiated her journey to make it her own. Each of these participants had a similar time when they understood their faith was reflective of their parents' faith, but finally moved toward making it their own. This personal ownership was not always through the Bible classes, as Karen mentioned, but was because of other personal circumstances that impacted her personal ownership. The Christian participants all believe that the Bible classes gave them more evidence to back up what they believe and to have confidence to own that belief personally, rather than just accepting their parents' Christian beliefs.

Each participant saw the influence of their family background, but it did not hinder their learning or development of morals, faith, and worldview in the Bible classes. Some parents agreed with the morals of the Bible and found that it supported what they already believed and did not see the harm in their children taking classes. Each participant was open to challenging their family background to develop personal ownership over what they believe and why. At this stage of development, students seek answers for what they personally believe yet still respect their parents, and at the same time try to discover for themselves their own personal beliefs.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate grade 12 students' perceptions of the impact of the Bible curriculum and the teachers' instructional delivery of that curriculum at an open enrollment Christian international school in Asia. This chapter provided a brief look at the experiences and perceptions of six participants in an overseas Christian international school in Asia. Each participant was given a pseudonym and introduced with some

personal background information. The participant narratives also provided a description of the similarities and differences each participant brought to the research.

Data was collected through individual interviews, focus group interviews, and weekly journal writings. Once all data were collected and transcribed, a process of first cycle coding, using in vivo and initial coding was conducted. Second cycle of coding was conducted using pattern codes which later emerged into five themes. The five themes were: (a) authentic learning; (b) interdisciplinary connections; (c) personal ownership; (d) teacher presence; and (e) tolerance. Each of these themes were common amongst all participants and data sources.

Finally, the results for the research questions were addressed by answering the four research sub-questions for this study. Two aspects of prior knowledge became intertwined in this research: (a) prior knowledge before entering the school and (b) the prior knowledge students held before each new class every semester. Each participant identified the need for a foundational knowledge of the Bible to take high school Bible courses. They also expressed that knowledge of the Bible did not impact their perceptions of the class, but it was more often the teacher that impacted their view of the class. Participants also expressed a desire for an authentic and active engagement with the content versus passive learning. Not only did the class need to engage the student with the content, but students sought a connection with other disciplines of study rather than learning the Bible as a stand-alone content. The majority of participants want to be challenged to think, express, and discuss their worldviews in an environment that is tolerant of diverse opinions and does not create conflict. Students perceived that when they are challenged in a safe environment, that is when they further developed their morals, faith, and worldviews. Finally, each participant saw the influence of their family background on their personal beliefs, but were at a point where each began to take ownership of their personal beliefs.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this case study was to investigate grade 12 students' perceptions of the impact of the Bible curriculum and the teachers' instructional delivery of that curriculum at an open enrollment Christian international school in Asia. Student feedback is often seen as a threat and overlooked by teachers, but the feedback from students is often reliable and can impact what is taught, how content is taught, and how students are assessed. Therefore, the researcher's goal was to give students a voice to express their personal experiences with the Bible classes and teachers by answering questions regarding their experiences and personal learning. This chapter includes a summary of the research findings, discussion of the findings, implications, delimitations and limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.

Summary of Findings

Yin's (2015) five phases of analysis were used to analyze the individual interviews, focus group interviews, and the student journal reflections for all six participants in this study. Through this process five themes emerged and were identified: (a) authentic learning; (b) interdisciplinary connections; (c) personal ownership; (d) teacher presence; and (e) tolerance. The central question for this study was: How does the students' perception of both the content of a Bible curriculum and the teachers' instructional delivery of that Bible curriculum affect students at an open enrollment Christian international school in Asia? Four sub-questions emanated from and were used to answer the central question. A summary of the findings for each research sub-question is provided, which gives insight into answering the overall central question for this research.

Research Questions

Sub-Question 1. How does grade 12 international school students' prior knowledge of the Bible or Christianity impact their perceptions of a Christian international school's Bible curriculum?

For this study, prior knowledge was reviewed from two different perspectives, (a) prior knowledge to enrolling in the school and (b) knowledge obtained and carried with them into the next Bible class during high school. Christian students came into the school with an expectation of taking Bible classes, but the knowledge they brought into the classroom caused boredom as the curriculum was repetitive and the information did not add to their previous knowledge. The non-Christian participants' prior knowledge was either non-existent or limited in a general view of going to heaven or hell. With this lack of knowledge, participants brought some skepticism into the classroom, but with an open mind they viewed the new content as learning like any other academic subject. Regardless of religious belief, the participants viewed a basic introductory knowledge of the Bible as a necessity for taking high school Bible classes. Therefore, one participant who took the introduction to Bible class in grade 9 found that she was better able to understand later classes than if she had not taken the basic introduction class. After all participants had taken Bible classes in high school, prior knowledge was useful, but was not assimilated or accommodated in adding new knowledge. Participants found that, even with prior knowledge, they were not able to connect that knowledge to previous classes due to the lack of a vertically articulated curriculum and, therefore, utilization of the prior knowledge was limited.

Sub-Question 2. How do the high school Bible classes at a Christian international school impact the perceived moral, faith, and worldview development of grade 12 international school students?

The second question investigated students' perceptions of the role the Bible classes had on their moral, faith, and worldview development. The findings of this research study showed that students matured to varying degrees in their moral, faith, and worldview development from their participation in high school Bible classes. Participants most often perceived that Bible classes provided more evidential support for what they viewed as their worldview and faith development. This perceived support was expressed as a personal ownership for their morals, faith, and worldviews, rather than beliefs inherited from their parents or teachers. Christian students felt they developed more support for and understanding of what they believed, as well as answers to why they believed in Christianity. While the non-Christian students would often refer to their worldview development with morals, they were clear that it was not religion, nor were they religious, but their worldview was also a form of faith.

Sub-Question 3. How does a Christian international school teacher's instructional delivery method in a Bible class impact grade 12 international school students' perceptions of the Bible curriculum, and their moral, faith, or worldview development?

Teachers' instructional delivery methods and the teachers' demeanor were significant factors in students' perceptions of the Bible curriculum and consequently their perception of their personal development. The findings of this research study show that students desired to be engaged in the Bible classes, especially with authentic participation and discussions. Although the students desired to be active participants in their learning, the predominate instructional delivery method was one of lecture and classroom reading, or passive learning. Students perceived an increase in their critical thinking skills and a deeper understanding of the material when they actively engaged with the content. Engaging with the curriculum was a significant factor for worldview, faith, and moral development amongst the participants. Specifically, the

participants highlighted the value of connecting the Bible curriculum with other disciplines of study, as well as relating the content to themselves personally or hearing personal stories from the teachers. The findings showed that students see a teacher's demeanor in the classroom as influencing their learning, as the teacher presence in the classroom created the environment needed for students to engage and authentically participate in classroom discussions. Whenever content connected to other subjects or personally related to them, students could engage and discuss the material in a way that was meaningful to them, which challenged them to think about what they believed and why.

Sub-Question 4. How does an international school students' family background impact their perceptions of the Bible or Christianity and their moral, faith, or worldview development?

The fourth question probed the family background of each participant and the influence it had on their personal development and view of Christianity. Overall, all students recognized the significance of their upbringing on their personal morals and faith. Christian students identified the family as influential in their worldview development, as often religion is identified as worldview. The Christian students found it normal to take Bible class in a Christian school and saw it as an expectation. The non-Christian students' family backgrounds influenced their students' perceptions of the Bible and Christianity, especially when parents' initial instructions to their children was to be cautious of Christianity. That caution by parents was aimed more at Christianity as religion, as all the participants acknowledged that they viewed the morals in the Bible as no different than what they believe and their parents accepted the morals, but not the religion. At first the non-Christian participants were cautious. However, over time they became less cautious and sought what they personally believed compared to their parents' beliefs. All the participants in the study recognized the initial influence of their families, yet eventually

conceded a time when they identified and owned what they believed, and not just restatement of their parents' beliefs. Some students moved away from what their parents said was true, while others found answers to their questions to support what they believed, therefore making it their own. The key finding, however, was that even though each participant was influenced by their family background, it did not prevent or hinder them from learning and taking ownership of their morals, faith or worldview through the high school Bible classes.

Discussion

The following section is a discussion of the findings related to the theoretical and empirical literature reviewed in Chapter Two. The literature review in Chapter Two included information on student perceptions, teaching methods and curriculum, prior knowledge and learning, and worldview identity and are linked to the findings of this study. The findings of this study support the theoretical framework and empirical literature.

Theoretical Findings

This study was framed around the theories of Kohlberg's moral development, Fowler's faith development (FDT), and Piaget's cognitive development theories (Fowler, 1991, 2001; Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977; Piaget, 1972). Though the study is framed on three individual theories, the findings suggest that each of them are not separate from one another; rather, there is a need for one in order to "advance" in another.

Cognitive Development. Piaget formulated the cognitive development theory on the belief that humans develop intelligence through a set of linear stages from infancy to adulthood, but this linear development does not take into consideration the needs of the individual learner (Case et al., 1988; Feldman, 2004; Flavell, 1992; Piaget, 1972). Building cognitive development implies students need pre-existing knowledge in order to add new knowledge and create a whole

new understanding of the content or skill learned (Gurlitt & Renkl, 2010; van Kesteren et al., 2014).

Findings from this study support the need for prior knowledge of content, in order for students to add new knowledge from the high school Bible courses. Even though students saw the need for at least a foundational or basic knowledge of the Bible, there was still a need to “check” that knowledge for misunderstanding of prior knowledge in order to add new knowledge (Fortosis & Garland, 1990). For students to assimilate new knowledge, foundational knowledge should be properly identified by the teacher to effectively build upon. Some students had a misunderstanding of Christianity prior to coming to the school, but as they added new information, their inaccurate views were replaced with the truth of the Bible. Students also found that teachers’ personal interpretation of the scripture was not the same from class to class or from teacher to teacher, which caused a disconnect between prior knowledge and new knowledge. Findings also supported the need for teachers to identify what students know about a topic covered in class so they do not repeat what students already know and they develop content that encourages deeper level thinking.

In several instances the findings of the study produced disequilibrium or challenges to what students believed. Participants desired to be challenged in their thinking and analysis of Bible class material. They understood that when they were challenged, they grew in content knowledge as well as moral, faith, and worldview development. Being challenged to think is a form of disequilibrium in the cognitive development process that forced students to think about what they believe and why (Biniecki & Conceição, 2014; Fortosis & Garland, 1990). Even though disequilibrium occurs through a challenge to student belief, it is only effective when

carried out in a manner that is not demeaning, negative, or condemning, but through an authentic, logical discussion (Blasi, 1983; Flavell, 1982).

Finally, Piaget laid out a linear view of cognitive development without considering the individual learner in the development of curriculum. Brainerd (1978) viewed Piaget's cognitive development as a guide for intelligence development when it came to vertical articulation of a curriculum. However, teachers must address the individual students by helping them learn concepts based on the individual's level of cognitive development at that moment. Results of this study suggests that a Bible curriculum cannot be developed solely based on cognitive development of content, but must consider individual learners' skills to assimilate, analyze, and apply the material previously learned. Participants in this study supported the need for prior knowledge to take all the high school Bible classes. However, it also conveyed the need for teachers to see students as individuals. Each participant expressed a different perspective of what they needed to better grasp the material and add to their prior knowledge.

Moral Development. Kohlberg's moral development theory has several stages that individuals go through over time to develop values, moral order, or right and wrong (Carpendale, 2000; Kohlberg & Power, 1981). Moral standards are also developed as a child increases knowledge and are not just an inheritance from the parents (Blasi, 1983; Kohlberg, 2008).

Participants expressed that their morals, especially of right and wrong, originated with their parents and influenced their moral development. Nevertheless, participants suggested their development was not a result of merely accepting what their parents told them to be right and wrong. Students disclosed their views of right and wrong were enhanced by citing the knowledge and discussions gained from Bible classes, which at times challenged what they personally viewed as right and wrong. Some participants indicated a partial move away from what their

parents viewed to be right and wrong, yet they still respected their parents' viewpoints. Students in this study supported the theory, at this point in their moral development, that they were not just conforming to traditional rules, but constructing their own individual views of right and wrong (Carpendale, 2000). The cross-cultural aspect of this study also found that regardless of culture, students all agreed with the morals of the Bible and saw no difference from what they already knew from their parents, and agreed with the morals presented in the school. What appeared to be disagreement was not the morals, but rather religion.

Not only were students constructing a personal view of their morality, they were using the knowledge from the Bible class as a basis for analysis or personal review of what they believed to be right and wrong. Yet, when the knowledge and intrinsic morals disagreed, students were personally challenged to seek answers. The action of teachers was an indicator of this disequilibrium, because students were faced with what they heard in class to be right and wrong based on the Bible, and what they saw from teachers or other Christians around them. This disagreement between what they learned and the teachers lived out caused participants to question their morals and actions, but most importantly to identify what they believed to be right and wrong and why.

Moral development is also influenced by the desire of students to seek approval, fit in, or adapt to situations, which often is seen as an outward behavioral change (Blasi, 1983; Kohlberg & Gilligan, 1971). A few of the participants discussed their own journey of behavioral changes after initially entering the school. They associated those changes with personal learning of right and wrong from the Biblical values and principles found in the Bible classes. Findings from this research suggest that students adjusted their outward behavior to fit in initially, but the longer a student remains at the school, the more inclined they are to take actual ownership of their beliefs

and make them their own. Students in this study supported the idea that modeling and actions teachers incorporate inside and outside the classroom can bring about moral change, but only if accompanied with lessons that engage students in learning (Court, 2010; Rosenberg, 2011).

Foster and LaForce (1999) found on university campuses that Christian university student values did not vary significantly over a four-year enrollment. The results of this case study, though not longitudinal, had similar findings among the Christian participants. The Christian participants all considered their values had not changed over the course of high school. The non-Christian participants were mixed in their views of moral development in high school, but more often cited larger moral development change occurring in the middle school years. All participants also saw their values as quite different from students at other non-religious international schools whom they have interacted with at various athletic events in the region. Brown and Annis (1978) found that frequency of being in a religious setting did not equate to moral development. Findings from this research partially support this as the longer students were enrolled in Bible classes, the more “normal” it became, or as the participants often cited, it became boring or less relatable. Though students were Biblically literate, when it came to their knowledge base, they appeared to become more immunized to the moral and faith discussions.

Faith and Spiritual Development. Fowler used both cognitive and moral development theories as the framework for his stages of faith development theory. Parks (2011) would later expand upon Fowler’s stages to highlight specifically a young adult stage of faith development. Fowler’s FDT is not a religious faith.

Throughout this study, the participants were all quite clear on the differences between religion, faith, and worldview. Each of them identified that one can have faith and not be religious, or someone can hold a worldview and not have faith. Though they could identify this

intellectually, they also saw the interconnectedness of each of the terms, which supported previous research that highlighted that one could be considered religious and participate in traditions yet not be spiritual or vice versa (Craft & Rockenbach, 2011; Yocum, 2014). This was characterized by the non-Christian participants as they all agreed they had an individual faith, but they did not have a religion or believe in religion. To the contrary, the Christian participants strongly stated they had a personal faith and were religious. However, they concluded they might be more religious if they were in their home country, where more religious traditions or opportunities are available to them as an adolescent, such as a church youth group that currently does not exist for them. Nevertheless, when these students were provided opportunities, often outside of the class and still associated with the school, they did participate in these activities. On the other hand, some of the non-Christian students also participated in some of these same activities that were often seen as religious, but were events that they morally supported, like service trips, or they were just curious about the religious activity.

The participants in this research supported Fowler's theory as they were within the synthetic-conventional stage where the formal operations stage also intersects (Fowler, 1991; Love, 2002; Parks, 2011). During this stage, the participants desired to think abstractly, critically analyze the content material, and think from another viewpoint. Although they moved more toward the abstract, they still struggled with the abstract and continued to seek concrete answers to their questions. The findings support the stage of learning as being ambiguous, as students wanted answers to their questions, yet teachers could not always give a direct answer of yes or no to the student question. Though the new information was interesting and they were challenged to think and create new information, they still sought a concrete, black and white answer. The

findings strongly supported the students' opinions of the importance of learning about other religions or worldviews so that they can see it from a different perspective other than their own.

This study supports Fowler's (1991) view that logical development is more of a cognitive development phenomenon, while faith is more "intuition, emotion, and imagination" (p. 42). Findings from this research suggest that students desired more logical reasoning or critical thinking using logic, as they believed logical reasoning would help them further understand the Bible and Christianity. Yet, the participants also desired a personal experience or some circumstance that, logically, they believed would develop faith. While the findings showed that students took a personal ownership of their beliefs, they still sought to make it more personal, with a desire to have the Bible classes relate more to them.

Parks (2011) suggested the young adult faith development stage is a time of ambiguity and moving toward making one's faith personal and individual. Students in this research supported this developmental process. Participants often reflected on not having concrete answers to difficult questions, yet at the same time acknowledged it might be difficult to find those answers unless they personally sought and found answers for themselves. The participants often commented how difficult it was having different views or interpretations of the scriptures from various teachers which often clouded their perceptions of finding a black and white answer in the Bible. Because of these differences between teachers, they were challenged to seek answers for their questions through Christian peers in the classroom.

Students in this study, though still in the faith development process, were Biblically literate. They knew the facts and the information in the Bible, which does not support an inherited faith, but it does support a cognitive knowledge of the Bible. The findings of this study showed that students knew facts and information from the Bible, whether they had no faith or an

inherited faith, and did not support the research of Biblically literate students on Christian university campuses (Craft & Rockenbach, 2011; Parks, 2011). Therefore, engaging students with that knowledge and scripture needed to be further developed. All participants supported findings that engaging Biblical knowledge is essential in moving from head knowledge closer to heart knowledge.

Finally, faith or spiritual development must not rest solely on attending Bible classes (Astin et al., 2011; Potvin & Lee, 1982). Students in this study found that having a prior knowledge is important to build upon in Bible classes. However, they found even greater significance in connecting the Bible to themselves personally, as well as connecting the Bible to other subjects. Therefore, these findings support the idea of interdisciplinary connections, rather than studying the Bible as a stand-alone subject, so that students further develop their faith.

Empirical Findings

Student Perceptions. This research study corroborated the literature regarding student perceptions of the teacher, effective teaching practices, and teacher perceptions of the students.

Prior experience with a teacher gave students preconceived ideas and expectations for the class that influenced their engagement in the classroom setting. The instructor does have influence on student perception and in this study the instructor was the key influencer in their perception of Bible classes, as suggested by Pruitt, Dicks, and Tilley (2010). They found that students were influenced either by previous classroom experience with an instructor that changed their views of the class or a barrier was created due to preconceived expectations for the class. In this study, barriers for student learning were the teacher's demeanor and the teacher's interaction with students in the classroom, often cited by students as derogatory in nature. Another barrier was the student perception that the class was either too laid back or too strict. Both scenarios

created a barrier for engaging in class, as they felt that they either didn't have to engage or there was apprehension about engaging in open discussions.

The findings of this study supported the literature that students believe effective teaching occurs when teachers capture their attention or engage them in group projects (Akar & Yildirim, 2011; Dozier, 2012; Hagay & Baram-Tsabari, 2015; Lemley et al., 2014; Pruitt et al., 2010). Participants in this study often described effective teachers as fun, using humor in class, telling attention-grabbing stories, or being active in their learning through group presentations or projects.

Another finding of this study was that some students perceived themselves as passive learners rather than active and engaged in the classroom, as maintained by Kane and Chimwayange (2014). In addition, students sought out peers rather than the teacher when they did not understand the material.

The literature, confirmed in this study, also supports student perceptions on the characteristics valued in effective teachers, such as being passionate about what is taught, being relational with students, exhibiting expertise in content, and engaging with cultural differences in the classroom (Linton, 2013; Siegle et al., 2014). This study expanded the student view of effective teaching for Bible teachers by incorporating a teacher's open mindedness and lack of bias as important in encouraging effective and authentic discussions in the classroom. The classroom learning environment, where students are engaged, feel safe to share, and are challenged to learn was key to student engagement (Burton & Nwosu, 2003; Lemley et al., 2014; Radovan & Makovec, 2015). This literature corroborates the study in that students wanted to be authentically engaged in their learning, within a classroom environment that was safe to share

beliefs and opinions without judgment, yet challenged to critically think about the subject presented.

Teaching Methods and Curriculum. Brownlee (2001) acknowledged that teachers who believe in absolute truth often use one-way learning processes, or as students in this study stated, a lecture. This study found that the instructional practices were more often teacher directed in Bible classes, causing students to acquire knowledge rather than the teachers making a personal connection with students through the material. Participants of this study often responded that they desired to have a more personal connection with the material. This study revealed that students wanted to hear teacher experiences or stories, reflecting and validating what they were learning from teachers and peers from personal experiences. These findings are characteristic of the literature on Christian education and engaging students with content (Brownlee, 2001; Saunders-Stewart et al., 2015).

This research study supports the need for students to be engaged in the learning process. Matching the curriculum to specific learning styles is not always feasible, but giving students a variety of opportunities to engage with the content increases their personal relevance to the material (Wilson, 2012). On reflection, participants often revealed personal learning preferences they perceived would increase their application of the material. When students utilized their preferred learning style, they were engaged with the learning, it held personal meaning allowing them to dig deeper into the topic, and it enhanced their long-term memory (Alexander-Shea, 2011; Brooks & Thurston, 2010; Gay, 2013; Rupley & Slough, 2010).

Students often associated a deeper level of learning or understanding of content when they were engaged in more student-centered instructional settings (Beusaert et al., 2013; Court, 2010; Ginns et al., 2013; Saunders-Stewart et al., 2015). This deeper level of understanding was

seen in this study through a variety of practices students saw as helpful to their learning process. Students discovered topics were more meaningful if they wrote about the content, processed the material in writing, and realized they would not be judged or accused of not writing what they really believed. Other times students found that group presentations or small group discussions focusing on a specific topic were helpful for personally relating and thinking about content. Ginns, et al. (2013), suggests that to engage students when reading a text, a more conversational or discussion oriented approach is preferred. Students in this study validated this approach as they did not find it helpful to read any text in class without other associated activities.

In the area of academic vocabulary, this study did not fully align with the published literature. CLD students in this study did not perceive themselves as struggling with the academic vocabulary needed for Bible classes. Students in this study also found that reading the Bible in English was predominately easier than reading in their native language. This research showed that participants had longer exposure to the Bible vocabulary because of the required four years of Bible classes. It might also indicate students just did not recollect the difficulty they had when they initially began Bible classes. However, the study did support the idea that students make personal connections between different subjects and content (Alexander-Shea, 2011; Brooks & Thurston, 2010; Gay, 2013; Rupley & Slough, 2010). Students in the study supported an increased long-term comprehension as they connected the content from Bible classes with the content from other subject areas. When students developed understanding or hooks in other academic content areas, they were more easily able to place themselves within the context of Bible content, with teacher guidance. That perception by students was evident throughout this study.

Prior Knowledge and Learning. Research shows that students who have prior knowledge enhance their overall learning as they either assimilate or accommodate new content into a pre-existing framework (Gurlitt & Renkl, 2010; Swiderski, 2011). All participants in this study believed that having prior knowledge was not only helpful, but essential in taking high school Bible classes. Although students had varying levels of prior Bible knowledge, the difficulty in recalling that knowledge from memory was challenging in some of the classes. Students in this study needed more connections between classes to utilize previously learned content. Students perceived the content as not building upon prior learning, or vertically articulated, so when new stories were taught, they were not able to connect to previously learned content. The difficulty for students in this research was that teachers were unable to effectively draw out that prior knowledge to utilize it in their classes. Thus, the study revealed the student perception of desiring teachers to utilize more effective strategies in order to retrieve that prior knowledge (Gurlitt & Renkl, 2010).

Braasch and Goldman (2010) put forward the need for retrieving prior knowledge to enhance connections with reading textbooks, while Rupley and Slough (2010) suggested students at this age read texts to learn information rather than learning to read. The findings in this present study reflected these ideas, as students needed to access prior knowledge for context in what they read and classes at this level were more directed toward learning what was being read. Participants realized that prior knowledge helped as they read to learn, but all the students struggled at times with comprehending the Bible. Berg and Huang (2015) suggest that second language learners have difficulty with the academic language of a text, but this research found that not only did second language learners have difficulty reading the Bible, but some of the native English learners had difficulty comprehending the Bible as well. Each of the participants

in this study found that reading the Bible without discussion was difficult because they did not always understand what was being read. This study found that regardless of the language of students, at some point they all struggled with comprehending the text, and thus struggled with personally applying the material and making it relevant to themselves.

Though research shows that CLD students may be more hesitant to talk in class because of language development or confidence in expressing their thoughts and opinions on the subject, this study found that students were willing to share their thoughts and opinions, but chose not to because of the teacher presence in the classroom (Abrami et al., 2015). Nonetheless, each of the students perceived the need to be challenged to critically think on the presented material. These perceptions confirm the literature that suggests students desire to have dialogue and authentic instruction to learn in the classroom environment and develop those critical thinking skills (Abrami et al., 2015).

Worldview Identity. Worldview identity and religious identity are often defined similarly and have significant parallels, but both ideas are different, even though many students associate their worldview identity with their religious identity (Mayhew et al., 2014). Though students may state their worldview as a religion, they are more likely to express multiple aspects of their values and beliefs, or what they see as right or wrong as they define their personal worldview (Cohen-Malayev et al., 2014; Valk, 2012). Literature also identified that religious educational settings may not always help form a student's worldview identity, but it directly influences the values and morals of students as they engage with society respectfully and in a civil manner (Vermeer, 2010).

In this study, students who expressed a specific religion also expressed this religion as their worldview. The Christian students in the study always indicated that their worldview was

their religion of Christianity, but also further expressed personal beliefs and why. However, the non-Christian students reflected their worldview by expressing what they valued or believed or specifically how they knew what was right or wrong, without a religious identity. Two of the three non-Christian participants would not label their worldview, and while one labeled himself as deist, all three did not identify with any one religion. The participants in this study mirrored research that students express their worldviews using beliefs and values (Valk, 2012). Both the literature and this research found that students in religious educational settings develop morals and values, believing this development is important to their future of engaging with people respectfully and knowledgeably.

It is difficult to gage the inner-heart transformation of the students in this study, or any study for that matter. However, their identities, religious and social, were reflective of research that indicates an inner change is often reflected in these outward changes (Cohen-Malayev et al., 2014; Layton et al., 2011; Vermeer, 2010). Christian students of this study often found they were acting a certain way that they thought reflected their religious identity and were judgmental of other professing Christians who did not reflect this identity in their actions. All participants exhibited inner changes that came partially from social identity because they were required to follow the rules to fit in at the Christian school. It must be noted that adolescence is defined as a period when students develop religious, social, and worldview identity through a range of individuals and cognitive knowledge (Love, 2002; Parks, 1982, 2011). The results from this study affirmed that definition, showing that these students were still solidifying their personal worldviews, but still had questions about faith, beliefs, and religion. Frequently, participants in this research cited obtaining feedback from peers or discussions with peers as valuable in clarifying misunderstandings from a teacher, or even discussing other connections within other

content areas (Carpendale, 2000; Mayhew et al., 2014), and therefore influencing development of their worldviews, religious, and social identities.

One key aspect in developing worldview identity was the process of discussing a variety of religions and worldviews. Research suggests that seeing a worldview in action helps students formulate their own personal view (Long, 2014; Schuitema et al., 2008; White, 2002). When adults articulate their personal worldviews and act accordingly, it gives students a more valuable understanding of that worldview. To model a Biblical worldview, research suggests more mentoring, or individual or small group interactions (Brickhill, 2010; Long, 2014; Schuitema et al., 2008; White, 2002).

This study found that SIS teaches students various religious beliefs and even worldviews, during a high school Bible course, in a theoretical sense, asking students to identify their own worldview based on the theoretical discussions. Although the school teaches the definitions and key points or aspects of different religions and worldviews, students found that there was a practical application or modeling of these worldviews that helped them understand. Participants in this study supported the findings that teachers who do not clearly articulate their personal worldviews to the students often disengage a student in the classroom. However, teachers whose worldviews were supported with strong reasoning and a personal journey assisted students in seeing how to begin articulating their own worldview.

This study also found that the disconnect between a teacher's stated worldview and the modeling of that worldview through actions can sometimes conflict, which causes confusion for students and contradicts what they are learning. Finally, students desired to enhance their personal understanding of what they believed and why. Students were able to grapple with and better understand worldview thinking when they were involved in small group discussions,

engaged in discussing worldview topics, or concerned with the variety of perceptions of how people view God, the Bible, or other religious beliefs (White, 2002). The findings of this study reinforced what the literature suggests.

The length of time in religious education, or in a Christian environment does not always develop a Biblical worldview (Bryant, 2008; Meyer, 2005). In this study, the length of time a student was enrolled at SIS did not necessarily mean development of a Biblical worldview in that student. Three of the six participants did not hold a Biblical worldview but they had been at the school for at least four years. One of those three was at the school for over seven years and did not hold a Biblical worldview. Those Christian students who embraced a Christian worldview also had a personal faith that was still developing. Their family background and upbringing influenced this decision, but at this stage in their development they began to form a personal commitment to their worldview. Yet, this personal faith might not have developed if these individuals had not been exposed to the variety of beliefs and interactions with non-Christians in their class. The findings of this study suggest that exposure to other religious beliefs and engaging with peers who were not Christians may have aided the Christian participants to further their personal faith commitment.

Not one participant directly mentioned the influence of their passport country or culture, only the indirect link through their parents, as an influence on their personal worldview, yet exposure to different cultures and beliefs of individuals was influential in further discovering their own worldviews. Research suggests that TCKs are like chameleons and can shift identities, but at the same time do not reflect any specific home country cultural aspects when discussing their worldviews (Biniecki & Conceição, 2014; Moore & Barker, 2012). This present study found that the variety of perspectives and interactions with peers of different cultural

backgrounds helped them to respect and defend an individual's right to believe what they want to believe. These findings supported the experience of living overseas as influential in worldview development, even though students often accepted others rather than questioned them on their beliefs.

This study found that students were more tolerant of other beliefs, even if they disagreed with another's views. They did not necessarily engage in questioning different beliefs as the view from participants was that everyone has a right to their own views and beliefs and we all could be wrong. In addition, students did not want to create disharmony in the classroom; therefore, tolerance of others' worldviews did not always mean agreement, but rather conflict avoidance. As Binniecki and Conceição (2014) suggested, conflict avoidance among TCKs is demonstrated by the way they move between identities as needed, as well as an open mindedness and acceptance of others due to the transnational identity they hold.

Implications

The findings from this study have theoretical, empirical, and practical implications. The results of this study could be beneficial to international Christian school Bible teachers and schools that are considering changes in their Bible curricula. This section presents a discussion of theoretical, empirical, and practical implications for this study.

Theoretical

This study was based upon three theories, Piaget's cognitive development, Kohlberg's moral development, and Fowler's faith development theories (Fowler, 1991, 2001; Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977; Piaget, 1972). The current research study demonstrated the need to blend cognitive, moral, and faith development theories when engaging adolescents in the Bible classroom.

The development of content knowledge in students was important to build basic prior knowledge of the subject. Even though cognitive knowledge was important, this study found that connecting content knowledge of the Bible with other disciplines was important for long-term memory, personal ownership, and faith development. The study suggests that if a Bible curriculum is developed and taught from a purely cognitive approach, there is limited personal application or connection to other subjects, and it fails to influence a student's long-term memory, thus hindering the understanding of the true intent of the Bible. Each participant in this study revealed a need for foundational courses to build upon their Bible knowledge base that produced personal meaning in their individual lives.

Students in this study expressed the desire for an interdisciplinary curriculum that engaged both the cognitive and faith development theories. This study suggests that cognitive knowledge, or evidence, helped support students' faith development and further caused them to challenge pre-existing schema. Making the content relatable implies that teachers need to know their students, being aware of their interests (i.e. entertainment, social needs, pop culture, current events, etc.), and meeting educational needs considering their current life circumstances. When teachers connect with students in their present environment, linking content to their personal needs, they can analyze and challenge student views, often clarifying their own personal beliefs or faith. Participants in this study did not consistently experience this from teachers, but when they perceived these phenomena, they were engaged and expressed deeper meaning, understanding, and support for their beliefs.

Findings of this study support the concept of adolescent development of faith as when someone begins to personally own their beliefs and seeks answers for why one believes what they do. Students expressed the desire to understand the abstractness of the Bible and faith, but

they needed concrete evidence as well. Results from the current study suggest that interweaving cognitive and faith theories is important in creating that sense of personal ownership. Students need the logical connections to other sources outside of the Bible for evidence or support. To increase faith development, not only did participants need evidence, but they needed to engage that material in a way that caused them to question what was presented and then discuss the evidence with others, resulting in a personal conclusion. Therefore, this research found that merging these three theories in development of curriculum and instructional strategies was the most effective approach for enhancing students' long-term memory, personal ownership of faith, and overall faith development.

Empirical

This case study further expanded research on instructional delivery methods and its influence on student learning by focusing on the perceptions of students. Research supported this study on the need for students to have a foundational level of prior knowledge of the Bible in order to assimilate or accommodate information learned in the Bible courses (Braasch & Goldman, 2010; Gurlitt & Renkl, 2010; Rupley & Slough, 2010). Even with prior knowledge this study suggested that teachers need to access and build upon that knowledge in each Bible class, rather than make assumptions about what students already know. This study reflected other research that suggested worldview identity is often expressed in values and beliefs or a specific religious preference (Cohen-Malayev et al., 2014; Valk, 2012; Vermeer, 2010). These results suggested that students did express their worldviews in terms of values and beliefs, but also were beginning to augment and enhance that identity when they engaged in authentic discussions that helped them relate in a practical way to what was learned, including asking questions and challenging their preconceived views. Authentic participation and discussions were valued by the

participants in this study, but only to the extent the teacher created an environment free of judgment and condemnation, and where students did not feel brushed off or attacked for what they believed.

The study further corroborated what the literature said about the role of the teacher's presence in the classroom creating a safe environment for learning. Participants perceived a deeper level of learning or understanding when the instruction was more student-centered or engaging, confirming the concept and ideas of active learning (Beusaert et al., 2013; Ginns et al., 2013; Saunders-Stewart et al., 2015; Wilson, 2012). The research results suggested that students needed to engage with curriculum content through active learning practices. Instructional delivery should move beyond the lecture and reading mentality, and shift more toward personal application, discussion, and presentation of the material. Constructing meaning out of content is essential for learning and this study demonstrated that students need to make personal connections with the material (Alexander-Shea, 2011; Brooks & Thurston, 2010; Gay, 2013; Rupley & Slough, 2010). This current study went beyond creating meaning by making personal connections to the material. Participants indicated that connecting Bible class content with other disciplines of study was another key to understanding and a more profound level of learning. Often in Christian schools, connecting content across disciplinary lines is known as Biblical integration. Students in this study saw the need to take that one step further in the way classes are developed (Rosenberg, 2011; Schuitema et al., 2008; Wilhelm & Firmin, 2008). The results of this study support the need for Biblical integration in all subject areas (Reck, 2012; Schuitema et al., 2008), but further suggests that students want more intentional classes developed around interdisciplinary studies, focusing specifically on the connections between the Bible and science, math, history, art, or other disciplines.

Practical

The practical implications of this research study reflect the influence that each group of individuals may have on the Bible curriculum. Teachers, school leaders, and curriculum developers all have a role in the development and delivery of the Bible curriculum in a Christian school, therefore, they all might benefit from this research.

Teachers. The data analysis in this research acknowledged that a teachers' presence is essential in establishing structure for the classroom, but also in creating a safe environment where students are willing to engage in participating and discussion. Student perceptions from this research found that teachers' body language and the tone of voice used when discussing personal beliefs was important in creating a safe environment for authentic discussions. If teachers want to create authentic participation and discussions in the classroom environment, they should be impartial listeners who, even though they might disagree with a student, can present their views in a manner that is not offensive to students, but rather challenges them to inquire more deeply about their own personal views on the subject. The teachers should be careful not to impose their personal beliefs on students, recognizing that even Christians might not agree with the teachers' views on topics of discussion.

The results of this research suggested that the most successful Bible teachers share with students the specifics of why they believe in Christianity and the Bible. These specifics provide their personal journey of discovery and often includes evidence supporting why the teacher believes what they do, in a manner that is not imposing upon the students. Successful Bible teachers also create an atmosphere for authentic participation, not always for grades, but because the class is more focused on personal application or connections with other subjects. This authentic participation replaces rote memorization of facts. This research also suggests that

effective teachers need to utilize a variety of teaching methods that do not rely heavily on lecture and just reading of the Bible. The implications from this study suggest that Bible teachers need to be trained educators who differentiate teaching practices and meet students' needs to encourage personal application and understanding of the Bible.

Finally, teachers should be well equipped and knowledgeable in connecting the Bible with other disciplines of study. The implication of the results from this study is that students can understand and internalize Bible content when it is connected with other disciplines' content knowledge, such as when a teacher shares personal stories regarding science. Being able to bring a big picture view of how the Bible connects to other areas of interest for students is essential in not only cognitive development, but their faith development as well. Making the Bible a current story rather than just historical information, gives students a perception of how it relates to them now, rather than as simply a historical book or a book of fictitious stories.

School leaders. School leaders should reflect on the impact a teacher's presence has on students and the influence their demeanor has on students' perceived learning. Results of this research suggest that a teacher's presence influences authentic participation in the classroom, something students desire as they seek to understand the Bible and Christianity. School leaders need to consider teachers' attitudes, personality, and ability to interact with students when positioning them as a Bible teacher, because each of these aspects directly influence the classroom environment. Creating a safe environment for discussion of worldviews, beliefs, and one's faith is crucial, but almost impossible when teachers are more confrontational about their personal beliefs or judgmental, leading to the probability of disengaging students from classroom learning. With this type of teacher, students are more likely to tell teachers what they want to hear and give expected answers, rather than their own opinions. The practical implication here is

when school leaders are assigning teachers to a Bible teacher role, they should be aware of the teacher's personality and ability to remain non-judgmental, without confrontation in or outside of the classroom. They also need to be aware of the teacher's ability to incorporate outside resources appropriate for adolescents and diversify their instructional practices in teaching the content material.

Curriculum Developers. Curriculum developers may also be influenced by the practical implications of this research. When considering the research findings, curriculum developers should consider creating a Bible curriculum that is personally related to the students and interdisciplinary in nature. This study revealed that a greater impact was made, both in cognitive and faith development, when students could personally relate to the material and when students saw the connection between a religious text and another subject area.

Participants reported the desire to see Bible classes be more connected to the other subject areas (i.e., math, science, history, art, etc.). Participants even suggested ideas for this, such as a full semester curriculum on evolution and creation as a required Bible course, but team taught by the Bible and science teacher or create an astronomy course, studying not just the stars, but the intricacy of the development and even evidence that provides for the proof of the birth of Christ. Students desired answers to difficult questions for the world around them, using the Bible and a variety of resources to seek those answers. The implications of this study for curriculum developers is to create a curriculum that is in part interdisciplinary, and not just a stand-alone Bible course that goes through each chapter of the Bible. Instead a Bible curriculum is needed that engages students in current issues, applies to them personally, and develops Biblical literacy.

Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations for this study included the location of the interviews and the selection of the participants. The location was purposefully selected to meet the needs of the student schedules and transportation issues. All individual interviews and focus group interviews took place on campus in a private room that was not frequented by high school teachers or other students. Another delimitation was the selection of only grade 12 students who had been at the school all four years of high school and were currently enrolled in a Bible class. Limiting the selection of participants allowed the students to have shared teachers, feelings, and perceptions that only they could share together, due to the location and timing of the classes (Creswell, 2013).

One limitation of this study was the ability to generalize or transfer the results of the study to other international Christian schools outside of the Asia region or similar demographics to the school site used (Yin, 2014). One reason making this transfer difficult to other settings is that the site is in Asia and therefore the population of students enrolled in the school is predominately Asian. This strong Asian cultural influence may not be replicated at other schools. This study is also limited in the ability to generalize the results to other schools inside of Asia, but run by other organizations. Even if schools share similar demographics the structure of the Bible curriculum at other schools may vary, which could potentially provide different results than this study. This study was limited to the students' high school experiences; therefore, it cannot be transferred to a middle school or elementary setting with similar demographics of students.

Another limitation to this study was three of the six participants were children of employees of the parent company of the school. I sought volunteers from all grade 12 students

and only a few responded to participate. It was beyond my control to individually pursue students in the class who were of a specific religion and not employee children. The weekly high school schedule was a modified block schedule that could be considered another limitation of the study. Due to the modified block schedule and other events that occurred during the school week, some students only had Bible class twice during the week rather than three times. In addition, some students were out sick or on school events that further limited their Bible class time during this study. Another limitation for this study was the number of high school Bible teachers at the school. On average, during their high school experience, participants were exposed to three different Bible teachers. Due to the size of the school the high school typically does not employ more than two full-time Bible teachers in a school year and with teachers on a two-year contract, student experience with a variety of teachers is limited.

Further limitations of the study included bias on the part of the researcher. I have a Biblical worldview and a bias toward the current Biblical curriculum from my previous experience as a high school principal and curriculum coordinator. I am knowledgeable of the Bible curriculum that is taught in the high school, as well as the course titles offered to students for Bible. I took measures to keep this bias from occurring during the interviews by asking students to give me the course titles and explain the class in more detail if they could not remember the class, rather than initially providing them with the names of the classes. I initially withheld telling the participants the class titles until they described each of them and then gave them the class titles from each year. I also maintained neutral body language and tone of voice when asking follow-up questions of students during the interviews. Although it was difficult, I kept a professional demeanor and resisted correcting students on misunderstanding of scripture, religious and worldview definitions, or other inaccurate views of Christianity. Despite this

challenge, it created an atmosphere within the interviews that allowed students to truly express their views openly and honestly.

Recommendations for Future Research

This research study focused on student perceptions of the Bible curriculum and instructional practices that impacted their view of the Bible curriculum. This research study affirmed the existing body of literature regarding active learning, adolescent faith development, and teacher presence in the classroom. Even though this study confirmed existing literature, it further revealed several recommendations for future research.

The first area for future research might be to study the same major question, but consider the research from the standpoint of teacher perceptions. This study focused entirely on student perceptions of the Bible curriculum and instructional practices at an international Christian school in Asia. Further research could focus on how Bible teachers view the impact they have on students with their current instructional practices, both in the students' cognitive and faith development. The teachers' perspective on Bible curriculum with their views of students in Bible classes could expand the information available and provide Bible teachers with new teaching strategies to meet students' perceived needs and aid them in both cognitive and faith development stages.

Another recommendation for future research would be to compare an interdisciplinary Bible curriculum with a Biblically-integrated curriculum, analyzing the effectiveness of students' cognitive and faith development in overseas Christian international schools. The current study found that students desired a Bible curriculum that was more interdisciplinary in nature, rather than a stand-alone Bible course that studied a book of the Bible. An interdisciplinary Bible curriculum would still maintain the Bible courses, but the content may be more thematic in

nature and taught collaboratively by the Bible teacher and other subject area teachers. Currently, most Christian schools' approach to curriculum design includes Biblical integration that is dependent upon all teachers in every subject area to integrate the Bible, while Bible classes are primarily focused on studying factual content of the Bible. This might not always work in an overseas international Christian school. Further research comparing an interdisciplinary approach versus a Biblically integrated approach would enhance Bible curriculum development, particularly for overseas Christian international schools where students from diverse backgrounds enroll but need other connections to the Bible material to develop both their cognitive and faith development stages of learning.

A further recommended research study could be conducted over a longer period of time, in an overseas K-12 Christian international school, to track students from elementary through high school on their personal cognitive, moral, and faith development growth. A longitudinal study of this nature would broaden the scope of curriculum needs in each area and identify misunderstandings from an early age that might be lost in cross-cultural translation or language translation.

A final recommendation for future research would be to expand upon this study to include a more diverse student population and larger number of student experiences with a variety of different Bible teachers. Three of the six participants in this study were children of employees. Researching with a larger student participation rate would provide more student perspectives that might reveal different themes or reveal differences between Christian students who are children of employees and Christian students whose parents are not associated with the school.

Summary

The purpose of this case study was to investigate grade 12 students' perceptions of the impact of the Bible curriculum and the teachers' instructional delivery of that curriculum at an international Christian school in Asia. Through the use of a case study, one goal of this research was to give students a voice to express their perceptions of their experiences with the Bible classes and teachers utilizing individual interviews, focus group interviews, and weekly journal reflections. This qualitative case study was bounded by the location of the participants and the shared experiences of the participants with the Bible curriculum and teachers. Five themes emerged from data analysis collected from the six participants, each aligned with the research study questions. The results of the study were presented by answering the four sub-questions that contributed to the central research question for this study. The findings of this research added to the existing literature by providing student perceptions of active learning practices and Bible curriculum development in a diverse religious educational setting.

A significant implication and finding from this research can primarily benefit teachers and curriculum developers as they consider what to teach and how to teach the Bible in an open enrollment international Christian school. Students perceived a greater depth of understanding when they were actively engaged in the classroom learning process. The perception of their depth of knowledge was not due to the Bible content itself, but more often the way the teacher presented the material or the teachers' outward behavior and responses to students in class. Another significant implication was the desire of students to make meaningful connections with the Bible content which contributes to a long-term memory. When the Bible was connected to other disciplines, students felt a stronger connection and understanding of how the Bible fit into the greater design of the world. Not only were the interdisciplinary connections significant, but

the personal connections were also important to students. Students perceived that they understood the meaning of stories and scripture when the material related to them personally or when teachers shared personal stories expressing connections to the present. Making the Bible relevant to students in today's world was of importance for them to see its meaning and how it might be personally applied.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Participant Identification Survey

Introduction Page:

As a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as a part of the requirements for a Doctorate of Education. I am conducting research to better understand student perceptions of Bible classes at Christian international schools. Prior to conducting research, I am looking for specific candidates within a certain set of requirements. This brief survey is to begin to identify possible participants.

All of the following responses will remain confidential and for the purposes of collecting initial survey information for possible participation in a research study on Bible courses at SIS. The only person who will see this information is the researcher, Ms. Rachael Peterson, and all responses will not be shared with anyone else. Please take the time to complete this survey and consider being a part of future research in this area. Please answer each question truthfully and honestly to your best ability. How you respond is for my eyes only and will remain confidential at all times.

*Rachael Peterson
Doctoral Candidate
Liberty University*

1. Please provide the following information

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| <i>Full name</i> | |
| <i>Passport Country</i> | |
| <i>Email Address</i> | |
| <i>Phone Number</i> | |

2. What is your gender?

| | | |
|--|---------------|-------------|
| | Female | Male |
|--|---------------|-------------|

3. What is your First Language?

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <i>English</i> | |
| <i>Korean</i> | |
| <i>Chinese</i> | |
| <i>Japanese</i> | |
| <i>Other (please specify):</i> | |

| | | | | | |
|--|---------------|---|-----------|---|----------------|
| 4. <i>How many years have you been at this school?</i> | | | | | |
| 5. <i>How many different Bible teachers have you had in high school (9-12) at this school?</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 or more |
| 6. <i>Which of the following best describes your personal beliefs?</i> | Non-Christian | | Christian | | I am not sure. |

Answer the following questions:

| | Yes | No |
|---|------------|-----------|
| 7. <i>Are you currently enrolled in a grade 12 Bible class at this school?</i> | | |
| 8. <i>Have you taken all of the Bible classes in grades 9, 10, and 11 at this school?</i> | | |
| 9. <i>Would you be willing to be contacted to participate in a research on Bible courses at SIS? All information would remain confidential with the researcher.</i> | | |

Appendix B: Student Interview Questions

Student Individual Interviews:

1. How would you describe Christianity?
2. What did you know about the Bible prior to the class at SIS?
3. How did what you previously knew about the Bible or Christianity impact your view of taking Bible class?
4. How would you describe your values and beliefs prior to taking Bible courses at SIS?
Describe yourself (actions, responses to others, behavior, academics, worldview, etc.) prior to taking Bible classes at SIS (from grade 9-12).
5. How would you describe how Bible classes have impacted your values and beliefs?
Describe yourself (actions, responses to others, behavior, academics, worldview, etc.) after taking Bible classes at SIS (from grade 9-12).
6. Describe all of the required courses you take at SIS to graduate.
7. What impact have the Bible classes in grades 9-12 at SIS had on you personally?
8. What Bible class in grades 9-12 was the least beneficial for you personally? Why?
9. What Bible class in grades 9-12 was the most beneficial for you personally? Why?
10. What are some examples of how you have applied what you have learned in Bible class to your daily life?
11. What do you believe is missing from Bible classes at SIS?

Appendix C: Journal Entry Guidelines and Questions

Journal Entry Guidelines:

- All journal entries should be your true and honest individual reflections from your experience in Bible class during each specific week.
- All entries should be typed and minimum of a paragraph response to each question every week.
- All entries need to be emailed to the researcher at: rpeter37@liberty.edu
- All participants will receive an email reminder at the end of each week to submit their entry at the end of the day Saturday of each week.
- Each week the participant must reflect upon the same question and any additional comments they would like to add in regard to the Bible class that week.

Student Journal Questions

1. How would you describe the personal impact your Bible class had on you this week?
2. If you were the teacher, how would you have taught the content for the Bible class this week?
3. What is something from this week's class that made you think and want to "dig deeper" or you may have further questions about?
4. What did you not understand this week from Bible class and why did you not understand?
5. Overall how would you summarize your Bible class this week?
6. Any other observations from your Bible class this week?

Appendix D: Focus Group Guided Questions

Student Focus Groups:

All students

1. What examples of lessons can you give that you remember and what you learned from those lessons? Why were they significant to remember? How did it impact you personally?
2. What specific information from Bible class have you discussed or debated with someone else? Why did you continue that discussion outside of the classroom?
3. How do Bible classes impact your worldview, moral choices, or faith choice?

Christian students

1. How would you describe Christianity?
2. What is your view of the required Bible classes?
3. In what ways did the Bible courses challenge you in the application of your beliefs?
4. What is the most difficult aspect of the Bible courses at SIS?
5. How could Bible classes at SIS help you further develop your beliefs?
6. How would you describe the labels you have received by teachers or students at SIS because of your beliefs?
7. What are ways that Bible teachers have enhanced your experience in the Bible classroom?

Non-Christian students

1. How would you describe Christianity?
2. What is your view of the required Bible classes?
3. Why does SIS require Bible courses for all students?

4. What is the most difficult aspect of the Bible courses at SIS?
5. What are ways that the Bible teachers have helped you to have a better understanding of Christianity and the Bible?
6. How would you describe the labels you have received by teachers or students at SIS because of your beliefs?

Appendix E: Parental & Child Combined Consent Form

PARENT & CHILD COMBINED CONSENT FORM

A Case Study of Grade 12 International School Students' Perceptions of the Impact of a Bible Curriculum and the Teacher's Delivery of that Bible Curriculum in a Christian International School

Rachael A. Peterson
Liberty University
School of Education

Your child is invited to be in a research study of the impact of Bible classes on students. He or she was selected as a possible participant because of the four years they have been enrolled at SIS in the high school and participation in the Bible classes. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to allow him or her to be in the study.

Rachael Peterson, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University is conducting this study.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to identify student perceptions of the impact of the Bible curriculum and perceptions of teacher delivery of the Bible curriculum to grade 12 students.

Procedures:

If you agree to allow your child/student to be in this study, I would ask him or her to do the following things:

- One-on-one interview with researcher two times during the study. One interview will be conducted face to face. The second interview may be conducted face to face or via Skype, FaceTime or some other videoconferencing platform. Each interview is no longer than one hour.
- Focus Group interviews with all student participants of the study. This will be done one time on site at the school. This is no longer than one hour.
- Focus Group interview with a select group of student participants. This will be done once on site at the school. This is no longer than one hour.
- You will be asked to keep a weekly journal over the course of the study responding to several general questions regarding your Bible courses during that week. This will be done in a digital format (i.e., Word, Pages, Text Edit, your choice etc.) and sent to the researcher via email on a weekly basis.

All interviews will be audio recorded and focus group interviews will be audio and video recorded. These recordings will not be shared with administration or teachers, but will be kept in a secure locked location only accessible to the researcher. Your identity will be kept anonymous either using an alias or an identification number. All of your journal responses will also be kept in a secure location and given an anonymous identification.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

The study has minimal risks that are no more than what the participant may encounter in everyday life. A possible risk is increased discussion and feedback from individual Bible teachers during the course of the study. Another possible risk is increased discussion and feedback with other student participants in the study from the focus group interviews.

The benefits to participation may involve a change in classroom learning during the time of the study. Otherwise no direct benefit to the participant may be expected. The benefit of the study may have an impact on the further development of Bible curriculum at the school and future implications on delivery methods of the Bible to students in an international Christian school.

Compensation:

Your child will receive no compensation for taking part in this study.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report, I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records. All participants will be given an alias and anonymous identification number to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participant. All audio and video recordings will be used for transcription and data analysis. Individual anonymity can only be guaranteed during one-on-one interviews and through the transcription and data analysis. The researcher cannot guarantee that other participants in the student focus group interview will maintain the subject's confidentiality and privacy. The researcher will encourage participants to maintain privacy of focus group interviews.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to allow your child to participate will not affect his or her current or future relations with Liberty University, International Schools of China, or SIS. If you decide to allow your child/student to participate, he or she is free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study:

If your child chooses to withdraw from the study, you or he/she should contact the researcher at the email address included in the next paragraph. Should your child choose to withdraw, data collected from him or her, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but his or her contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if he or she chooses to withdraw.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Rachael Peterson. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at rpeterson37@liberty.edu or via mobile at [REDACTED].

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to allow my child/student to participate in the study.

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO ALLOW YOUR CHILD/STUDENT TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

The researcher has my permission to audio-record and video-record my child/student as part of his or her participation in this study.

Signature of minor: _____ Date: _____

Signature of parent or guardian: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

Appendix F: Superintendent Letter of Invitation to Participate

Date: May 23, 2016

Mr. _____

Superintendent- Asia International Schools Consortium*

Dear Mr. _____:

As a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education in Curriculum and Instruction. The title of my research project is A Case Study of Grade 12 International School Students' Perceptions of The Impact a Bible Curriculum and the Teacher's Delivery that Bible Curriculum in a Christian International School and the purpose of my research is to investigate students' perceptions on the impact of the Bible curriculum and teachers' delivery on grade 12 international school students.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research within the consortium of schools in Asia, specifically Sky International School*. I would like to request your permission to contact the head principal for the school to invite them to permit the school to participate in my research study. I would conduct my research by beginning with an invitation, to grade 12 students, in the 2016-2017 school year, to participate in an initial survey to identify participants for the study. Participants for my research will include grade 12 students.

Student participants will be asked to complete an initial survey in regard to the number of years they have been at the current school, what Bible courses they have taken, age, religious preference, ethnicity, and first language. The survey information will be used to identify which school will participate in the research study. A minimum of five and maximum of 15 student participants are desirable for this study. All student participants must have been at their respective school for all of their high school years. A minimum of three participants must identify with a non-Christian religious preference. Participants will be presented with a combined consent form that will require both student and parent signature. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on approved letterhead indicating your approval. This signed approval will be used when contacting the head principal for the previously identified school to gather school level approval and signatures.

Sincerely,

Rachael Peterson

Liberty University Doctoral Candidate

*Pseudonyms for the organization and school have been used in this letter for dissertation publication. When sending the letter to the superintendent the official school name and organization were used.

Appendix G: Head Principal Letter of Invitation

Date: May 23, 2016

Mr. _____

Head Principal- Sky International School*

Dear Mr. _____:

As a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education in Curriculum and Instruction. The title of my research project is A Case Study of Grade 12 International School Students' Perceptions of the Impact a Bible Curriculum and the Teacher's Delivery that Bible Curriculum in a Christian International School and the purpose of my research is to investigate students' perceptions on the impact of the Bible curriculum and teachers' delivery of that curriculum on grade 12 international school students.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research at your school. I would like to request your permission to contact grade 12 students and parents. I would conduct my research by beginning with a general survey to all grade 12 students in the fall of 2016-2017. This initial survey will be used to identify potential participants for the study. Once potential participants are identified they will be sent an invitation to participate along with a combined student and parent consent form. Participants for my research will only include grade 12 students.

Student participants will be asked to complete an initial survey in regard to the number of years they have been at the current school, what Bible courses they have taken, age, religious preference, ethnicity, and first language. The survey information will be used to identify which students will participate in the research study. A minimum of five and maximum of 15 student participants are desirable for this study. All student participants must have been at the school for all of their high school years. A minimum of three participants must identify with a non-Christian religious preference. Participants will be presented with a combined consent form for both students and parents to sign prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on approved letterhead indicating your approval. This signed approval will be used for my records and for delivering inquiries to SIS participants.

Sincerely,

Rachael Peterson

Liberty University Doctoral Candidate

*Pseudonyms for the organization and school have been used in this letter for dissertation publication. When sending the letter to the superintendent the official school name and organization were used.

Appendix H: IRB Approval Letter**LIBERTY UNIVERSITY**
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

7/12/2016

Rachael Ann Peterson

IRB Approval 2573.071216: A Case Study of Grade 12 International School Students' Perceptions of the Impact of a Bible Curriculum and the Teacher's Delivery of that Bible Curriculum in a Christian International School

Dear Rachael Ann Peterson,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,



G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

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Appendix I: Recruitment Email

August 1, 2016

Dear Grade 12 Student:

As a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as a part of the requirements for a Doctorate of Education degree. I am conducting research to better understand student perceptions of Bible classes at Christian international schools. Prior to conducting the research, I need to identify potential participants who fit a set of criteria and are willing to participate in the research. This brief survey is to begin to identify possible participants that will be contacted at a later date.

If you are interested in potentially participating in the research study, please complete the brief survey at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/9HSP723>. Completion of the survey is voluntary and will be used to identify possible participants who meet a specific set of criteria for the research study. It should take approximately five minutes to complete the survey. If you are interested in participating please complete the survey by September 1, 2016.

Please answer each question truthfully and honestly to your best ability. All of your responses will remain confidential and for the purposes of collecting initial survey information for possible participation in a research study on Bible courses at SIS. The only person who will see this information is the researcher, Ms. Rachael Peterson, and all responses will not be shared with anyone else. Your name and student email will be requested, but the information will remain confidential.

Please take the time to complete this survey and consider being a part of future research on student perceptions of Bible classes at Christian international schools. After completing the survey if you meet the criteria for this research you will be contacted via your student email by the researcher with further information and details for the study.

Sincerely,

Rachael Peterson
Doctoral Candidate
Liberty University

Appendix J: Student Recruitment Follow Up Email

Dear [Recipient]:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctorate of education degree. Last week an email was sent to all grade 12 students at SIS gathering some basic information from each student. In that survey you met the criteria for this study and marked that you would be interested in participating in the study. This follow-up email is being sent to you with further information about how to participate in the study. The deadline for participation is September 9, 2016.

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to participate in two individual interviews, two focus group meetings, and keep a weekly journal for three weeks. It should take approximately one hour each week to complete the procedures over the course of four weeks. Your name and/or other identifying information will be requested as part of your participation, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate please do the following:

- Contact me via email at rpeterson37@liberty.edu to confirm your willingness to participate in the research. Please email by Friday, September 9th.
- Complete the attached parent and child consent form and hand deliver it when you arrive for the first interview. The combined consent form contains additional information about my research for you and your parent to read and sign stating you would like to participate in the study. This must be completed and turned in at the first interview in order to officially participate. The first interview should take place by Friday, September 16th.

The deadline for receiving this form and first interview in this study should take place prior to Friday, September 16th.

Once I have received your email stating you would like to participate I will work with you to schedule the first interview. When you arrive for the first interview please bring the signed consent form. During the first interview I will give you more information about the journal reflections and focus group meetings.

If you choose to participate, you will not be compensated, but I will be grateful for your time and personal insight on this topic.

Sincerely,

Rachael Peterson
Doctoral Candidate
Liberty University



Appendix K: Bracketing Out Bias

| <i>Students statements or interactions:</i> | <i>I bracketed out my bias by:</i> |
|--|--|
| <p>When students were not able to remember the names of the Bible classes for each year.</p> | <p>I did not correct them if they got the class name wrong and listened to the description of the classes to focus on what they were saying about the content and instructional practices in the class. After the initial conversations came to a close I verbally read the titles of the classes that they took, which sparked more discussion.</p> |
| <p>A participant stated that they believe in Christianity and Jesus,, but not the religion, therefore, they are not a Christian.</p> | <p>At this point I wanted to further the discussion with the participant on what it means to be a Christian. I did not make a comment, nor did I attempt to correct this view by pointing out that belief is the first aspect of being a Christian.</p> |
| <p>When describing Christianity the participants often cited a relationship with Christ and a belief.</p> | <p>I wanted to add the concept of faith to the conversation, but did not inquire about faith as that would have influenced their definition of Christianity.</p> |
| <p>One participant noted she is often thinking about what non-Christian students are thinking in the class and further states she is a Christian and that is why she is wondering what they think.</p> | <p>I wanted to follow up this statement to ask the participant what she is doing to reach these students as a peer, fulfilling the Great Commission, but did not ask the question directly. Through the course of all the groups I asked if they discussed outside of class the Bible, which, overwhelmingly, did not happen with students.</p> |
| <p>Christian students commented that they see the two extremes of teachers, very conservative to liberal, which impacts how they view the teacher's actions.</p> | <p>At this point I wanted to discuss with the students various Christian perspectives and how they relate in the world today, but did not engage in a discussion about teacher actions and their need to understand the spectrum of Christianity.</p> |
| <p>One participant stated that he does not believe the Bible is the ultimate truth, but had to write it down in order to complete assignments.</p> | <p>Rather than disagree with his perception of the assignment I asked the student to explain it some more so I could hear exactly what he was trying to say in this situation.</p> |
| <p>One participant stated that “simply believing in Jesus won’t send you to heaven,” and would further express his views of what he would need to do as an individual. He further expressed the idea that he would need to be perfect and he is not.</p> | <p>At this point I wanted to interject that believing in Jesus and repenting is the way to heaven along with pursuing Christ daily. I wanted to explain that being a Christian is not perfection, but we are all sinners and works in progress. I chose to stay silent and listen to him further explain his views.</p> |