

Mystery, challenge and the training of teachers for Lutheran schools in Australia

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Having spent some 35 years teaching in Lutheran schools and being involved in the preparation of teachers for Lutheran schools for the past four years, the topic of training teachers for Lutheran schools in Australia came to me fairly quickly as I was considering what I might speak about in the inaugural lecture I was to present at Australian Lutheran College (ALC) in early 2006. I was also aware that the Board for Lutheran Education Australia (BLEA) was proposing a new formation program for teachers in Lutheran schools which would be more locally and regionally based than the program that had operated since the 1980s, so it seemed an opportune time to reflect on the training of teachers throughout the existence of Lutheran schools in Australia. I sensed that a study of this training over the years since 1839 would reveal some mysteries and challenges, and I was correct in this regard.

One would imagine that the training of teachers for Lutheran schools would always be influenced and in fact determined by the role those teachers were meant to play in the schools, which in turn would depend on the purposes the schools were meant to serve.

Therefore first of all I would like to look at the original purposes of Lutheran schools in Australia, the perceived role of the teacher in those schools, who these teachers were and the training they received in order to carry out their role.

The formal training of teachers for Lutheran schools throughout the twentieth century, especially since 1970 when a significant increase in Lutheran schools occurred, will then be discussed, bearing in mind the stated purposes of Lutheran schools and their connection to the LCA as indicated in various LCA and BLEA documents and policies.

Finally I will comment on the stated purposes of Lutheran schools today and the new policy in regard to the training of teachers, and then I will make some observations concerning the future. Along the way, I will point out the mysteries and challenges that I discovered while preparing the lecture.

Original purposes and the perceived role of the teacher

The Lutheran church worldwide has a history of establishing schools and holding the teachers in those schools in high regard.

If I could leave the preaching office and my other duties, or had to do so, there is no other office I would rather have than that of a schoolmaster or teacher of boys; for I know that next to preaching, this is the best, greatest and most useful office there is. Indeed I scarcely know which of the two is better. (*Luther's Works* 46: 253)

This statement from the reformer after whom our church is named certainly gives the vocation of teaching significant status!

Lutheran schools have existed in Australia for 167 years. From the arrival in SA of the first group of Lutheran immigrants led by Pastor Kavel in late 1838, a clear pattern emerged. As a new village was established, a school was opened, at Klemzig, Glen Osmond and Hahndorf in 1839,

and at Lobethal and Bethany in 1842. By 1875 there were at least forty-nine Lutheran schools that had begun or were still operating in SA, and there were still forty-six operating in 1900. It is estimated that at least this number had begun in Victoria and Queensland during this period as well, so by 1900 there were one hundred or more Lutheran schools throughout southern and eastern Australia, most of them one-teacher schools.

Mystery: why were these early Lutherans so keen to establish Lutheran schools?

There is no doubt that the chief motivation for establishing Lutheran schools was the biblical injunction given to parents to train up their children in the knowledge of the Lord, and the conviction that it was a congregation's duty to assist parents in this responsibility.

Another significant factor was the high regard for education that the early Lutherans brought with them from Prussia. Records from the time make it clear that Lutheran schools were established initially to

- nurture the faith of children in the various Lutheran congregations that sprang up in South Australia, Victoria and Queensland
- provide a basic education and develop 'good citizens'
- preserve the German language and culture
- prepare young men for service as pastors and teachers in the Lutheran church

So it can be seen that the purposes of the schools were very much tied to the ministry of the church. Former principal of Concordia College in South Australia, John Zweck, wrote that 'the congregational school was to be the nursery of the church' (1988: 140). The teaching of religion was given great importance. With rare exceptions students were children of the Lutheran congregation, and the teachers were Lutheran. Intentional nurturing in the faith was expected, and the weight placed on teachers achieving the schools' purposes was obvious.

It is significant to note that the early leaders of the church regarded the training of teachers as very important, and that in their planning they consistently linked it with the training of pastors. This indicates the importance placed on the theological training of teachers for Lutheran schools, as well as their professional academic training. However, the challenge of providing this theological training for all teachers in a formal way proved beyond the church in the early years, and, although official documents and statements suggest that the church still regards this training as vital, I believe it continues to be a challenge beyond the capacity of the church to meet.

Who were the teachers in these early Lutheran schools, and what training did they undertake for their role?

Right from the start the availability of suitable teachers was a problem. Initially, schools depended on pastors and firmly committed members of the Lutheran congregations to function as teachers in the schools. These teachers were 'called' by the congregation in exactly the same way as pastors, and while they were fairly well grounded in Lutheran theology as a result of their congregational life, there was a concern about the level of their professional training and their ability to teach in both German and English. In fact, for most of the nineteenth century, teachers in Lutheran schools taught almost entirely in German as they were of German birth and they were teaching children whose parents were German-born.

In a paper presented at the first Australian Conference on Lutheran Education (ACLE 1), Dr Charles Meyer observed that 'the first teachers in Lutheran and other denominational schools were often ill-equipped for the job, for until the turn of the century there was no permanent teacher-training institution'.

Yet Pastors Kavel and Fritzsche were agreed in principle that those who assumed the office of teacher should receive education and training to fit them for their work. In 1842 Fritzsche, who had migrated particularly in response to Kavel's request to come out and oversee the training of

men for service in school and church, began a training program for pastors and teachers at Lobethal with six students. Much of this training took place as the young men accompanied Fritzsche on his journeys back and forth between Lobethal and another church he served as pastor, Bethany in the Barossa Valley.

The first graduate from this teacher-training program was Ferdinand Mueller who had completed four years of training. Mueller had been the teacher in charge of the congregational school at Lobethal throughout this training period, despite having received only a mediocre elementary education in Germany as preparation. A second teacher-trainee of Fritzsche's, William Boehm, who later established the Hahndorf Academy, graduated in 1854 after five years of study.

The Lobethal College established by Fritzsche closed in 1855 after graduating these two teachers and a number of pastors.<sup>1</sup> The only formal training of teachers for Lutheran schools between then and 1890 took place at Boehm's Hahndorf Academy where approximately 20–25 teachers graduated for service in Lutheran schools, not a lot in 35 years especially when many more Lutheran schools had been established during this time.

The establishment of Lutheran pastor/teacher training colleges at Murtoa in country Victoria in 1890 and at Point Pass in country South Australia in 1895 not only reflected the fact that there were two Lutheran synods but that most Lutherans lived in the country rather than in the cities. These colleges, later to become Concordia and Immanuel respectively, graduated a total of about 35 teachers before 1900. Concordia shifted to Highgate in 1904 and Immanuel to North Adelaide in 1923.

It is interesting to note that there is no record of a training program for teachers for Lutheran schools in Queensland in the nineteenth century, even though one report suggests that there were about 40 Lutheran schools in southern Queensland by 1900.

The intention to provide proper theological and professional training of teachers for Lutheran schools in the second half of the nineteenth century were good, but in practice only a minority of teachers in the more than 100 Lutheran schools in Australia by 1900 had undertaken such training in either a church or state college.

Mystery: who were these teachers, what was their background and what training did they have for teaching in Lutheran schools?

A study of the list of teachers appointed to the Lutheran schools established in Victoria in the nineteenth century (Meyer 1996) gives names but little in the way of background and training, apart from those who came from Germany as immigrants and a couple who were graduates of the Hahndorf Academy.

Meyer reports that Nicholas von Thun, previously a Lutheran pastor, was the teacher at Sandhurst Lutheran School, Bendigo, in 1857, when it received this report from Inspector Parker: 'This school is without exception the most disorderly school I have visited. The master appears to have no control ... he speaks English imperfectly, and whatever may be his qualifications to teach children of his own race, he cannot possibly give correct instruction to the rest'. However, it is pleasing to note that von Thun's teaching skills improved over time, as three years later, in 1860, Inspector Parker noted that his teaching was now 'passable' and 'fair' though somewhat 'wanting in quickness'.

I imagine that this absence of detail on background and training would also be true for teachers in the early Lutheran schools in South Australia and Queensland, hence the background and

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<sup>1</sup> The small hut that Pastor Fritzsche used as his college is preserved within the Lobethal Lutheran Museum.

training of the teachers in Lutheran schools in Australia in the nineteenth century remains a mystery to be investigated further.

The training of teachers for Lutheran schools in the twentieth century, the purposes of these schools and their connection to the Lutheran church

1900—1966

As the twentieth century began, Lutheran schools basically retained their original purposes, and students continued to be almost entirely children of members of the local Lutheran congregation. The training of teachers for these schools took place in conjunction with the training of pastors at Concordia College in Highgate from 1905 onwards, and at Immanuel College in Point Pass, then North Adelaide (1923), later Walkerville (1942) and finally Novar Gardens (1957).

After the closing of all South Australian Lutheran primary schools during World War 1, their re-opening was slow. Most of the Lutheran schools in Queensland disappeared in the early twentieth century due to a process of acculturation and a change in attitude towards state schooling, while some of the Lutheran schools in Victoria had become state schools after registration.

Hence the demand for teachers for the reduced number of Lutheran schools in Australia was not as great in the first half of the twentieth century. The norm for Lutheran teacher training during this period was study at one of the state teacher-training institutions that had been established, supplemented by several years of theological study at Concordia Seminary or Immanuel Seminary. Thus at last teachers were receiving both a strong Lutheran theological preparation as well as their professional training.

Between 1905 and 1941 Concordia College and Seminary graduated thirty-seven day-school teachers. During this time Immanuel Seminary also graduated some teachers, and in the late 1930s Dr Karl Muetzenfeldt, who had a background in training teachers in Germany, took a class together with first and second year pastors in training. Muetzenfeldt gave a paper at the Eudunda synod of the UELCA on the need for Lutheran day schools and theological training for teachers. He tried to establish evening classes for teachers at Immanuel College, but apparently they were not well received.

Writing in the souvenir booklet to mark the hundredth anniversary of the training of Lutheran pastors and teachers for churches and schools of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia (ELCA), the principal of Concordia College from 1903 to 1939, Professor C F Graebner wrote: 'In strict adherence to the aim of training students to become pastors, missionaries or teachers, the curriculum of Concordia has always stressed the importance of thorough instruction of religious subjects during the entire college course'.

By the end of the Second World War, the norm for Lutheran teacher training was one or two years training at a state college, preceded or followed by one or two years of theological study at Concordia or Immanuel Seminary. By this time some women were training as teachers for Lutheran schools, all of which, with the exception of Concordia and Immanuel colleges in Adelaide, were primary schools until Concordia College, Toowoomba and St Peters College, Indooroopilly, were established in Queensland in the mid 1940s.<sup>2</sup>

The aims and purposes of Lutheran schools still focussed on nurturing Lutheran children in the faith, preparing some for the further training necessary for service in the church and preparing all students for a useful role as citizens in their communities. It was still believed that Lutheran teachers were essential if these aims were to be achieved.

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<sup>2</sup> The role of women teachers in early Lutheran schools deserves extensive research.

1966—1990

After the union of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia (ELCA) and the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Australia (UELCA) to form the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) in 1966 it was decided to separate all lay training from pastoral training.<sup>3</sup> The UELCA's Immanuel Seminary in North Adelaide became Luther Seminary for the training of pastors of the LCA and the ELCA's Concordia Seminary, Highgate, became Lutheran Teachers College (LTC), the lay training centre for teachers and lay workers.

It was accepted that the LCA lacked the resources to offer the full Bachelor of Education (BEd) to aspiring teachers at LTC, so the practice of teachers training in state teacher training institutions for two or three years and then completing a year or two at LTC, Highgate, undertaking courses developed and taught by theologians, continued as it had operated before union. The first principal of LTC, Dr Elvin Janetzki, was a theologian who regarded the office of the Lutheran school teacher as almost comparable to the office of the pastor, a view that was accepted by the General Synod at the 1970 Convention when it classified the role of teacher in a Lutheran school as an auxiliary office of the public ministry, and to that extent a churchly or ecclesiastical office.

While LTC was now beginning to graduate teachers for Lutheran schools, the numbers were small. As well as providing studies in theology—especially in the final year of concentrated theological studies—LTC was a spiritual formation community, particularly through its worship program and through supporting a ministry of prayer, care and encouragement for students, most of whom were resident on campus for at least four years.

Fifty-three teachers graduated from LTC during its days on the campus of Concordia College, Highgate, two of them being Adrienne Jericho, the current Executive Director of Lutheran Education Australia, and Richard Hauser, currently principal of Redeemer College, Rochedale, Queensland. Richard has served with distinction in five Lutheran secondary schools. His comments on the time spent at LTC make interesting reading.

We attended local tertiary institutions by day but lived at the college. When LTC was formed in 1968 the students felt like pioneers. We talked about 'the LTC spirit', we had our own magazine, and there was a rich community life. Worship was part of it, meals also, plus a rich social life. The community life was hugely valuable in developing a sense of vocation and common calling. I can recall being at a devotion one morning in my last year at LTC and feeling totally enthused about my calling as a Lutheran teacher. LTC provided an impetus for my service in Lutheran schools which has remained a force in my life to this day.

In 1975 LTC shifted to Ward Street, North Adelaide. By this time the boom in Lutheran schools, particularly in Queensland, had begun, and the demand for teachers was growing each year. As the years went by, an increasing number of the teachers new to Lutheran schools, especially those which provided secondary education, came from Christian backgrounds other than Lutheran, and some even came from non-Christian backgrounds.

Mystery: how could such teachers, when they knew little if anything about the theology and doctrines of the LCA, support the aims and purposes of its schools, which now included outreach as well as nurturing functions, which they had agreed to support upon their appointment?

This mystery has provided the LCA with the challenge it continues to face today, namely, how to provide the growing number of non-Lutheran teachers joining its schools with a knowledge of

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<sup>3</sup> The reason for this is a puzzle, considering that pastor and lay training had always been connected previously. After a gap of thirty-five years they were brought together again when Luther Seminary became Luther Campus in 1990.

Lutheran theology, its application to education and an appreciation of the ethos of Lutheran schools. An in-service option for theological studies, as well as the pre-service option offered by LTC, was developed to meet this challenge. In 1981 a one-year theology course was launched, developed by John Zweck and available for external study by teachers who had not completed the one-year internal LTC theological course.

The church gave LTC approval to grant those who completed this course either internally or externally, an official Diploma of Lutheran Education (DipLEd) and the convention of the LCA approved the Board of Lutheran Primary Education's recommendation that all new teachers appointed directly to Lutheran primary schools without having done the LTC course should be required, as part of their employment agreement, to undertake the DipLEd by correspondence. This was the forerunner to what is currently known as the LCA's requirement for accreditation status as a teacher in Lutheran schools.

At about the same time, the Board for Lutheran Secondary Schools also resolved that all lay teachers of religion in the church's growing system of secondary schools should have completed, or should begin working towards completing, the DipLEd. However, this was not adopted as formal policy at that time. In 1987 the Board for Lutheran Schools (BLS) produced some guidelines on chaplains and scripture teachers in Lutheran Secondary Schools, which included the statement that 'any lay teacher who is called upon to teach Scripture in a Lutheran secondary school should be theologically equipped for the task. ...The minimum requirement should be the DipLEd offered by LTC'. It was recognised that it was the school's responsibility to make it possible for such teachers to complete the DipLEd, and study leave or reduced teaching loads were suggested as ways to assist these teachers to complete this study. The statement concluded as follows: 'This will involve considerable expense but because of its importance this measure should be given high priority'. I believe similar words could be written today in regard to the implementation of the new staffing policy that has come into operation this year.

The result of these developments was that numbers enrolled in the external course increased each year until by 1990 they totalled a very impressive 500, when there were 845 teachers in Lutheran schools. However, many of those enrolled just kept on extending the time for completing their units, as they found the demands of the course too heavy, especially those women who were already carrying two full-time work loads—teaching and running a household! In order to assist teachers with this study, the teaching staff at LTC offered a number of five-day intensive workshops at various schools and locations around South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland during the holidays to help reduce the study required by correspondence.

The 1988 'Staffing Policies for Lutheran Primary Schools' stated that to be eligible to serve in a Lutheran primary school a teacher should either be accredited or provisionally accredited by the LCA and only accredited teachers could be called to serve in a Lutheran school.<sup>4</sup>

1990—2004

In 1990 LTC moved from Ward Street onto the campus of Luther Seminary as part of the newly named Luther Campus. Students undertook their three-year teacher training at a state institution and then completed the one-year DipLEd at Luther Campus. Most lived close to or on the campus and so participated in the communal life there. In 1992 the church-accredited DipLEd became the externally-accredited Graduate Diploma of Theology in Education [GradDipTh(Ed)] and completion of this diploma became the prerequisite for LCA accreditation status as a teacher in Lutheran schools.

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<sup>4</sup> Provisionally accredited teachers were to be appointed, not called. An accredited teacher was one who was a member of the LCA, was a registered teacher, had completed the DipLEd or the course prescribed at Concordia or Immanuel Seminary prior to 1968, or had completed a satisfactory year's teaching in a Lutheran school. A provisionally accredited teacher was one who had committed him or herself to completing the requirements for accreditation.

At about the same time Pastor Eric Simpfendorfer of Redeemer College in Queensland was writing a Theological Orientation Program for Staff (TOPS) as part of his Graduate Diploma in Education studies, required for registration as a teacher.<sup>5</sup>

In early 1995 the BLS produced the document 'Policies relating to staffing in Lutheran schools', which applied to all Lutheran schools, not just primary schools. This policy stated that 'the Church as a matter of policy seeks to staff its schools with **educators who are able to uphold the teachings of the church** and model the lifestyle of a Christian. In the first instance it seeks to employ trained and registered **teachers who are active members of the church**. Preference shall be given to competent educators who are active communicant Lutherans. Beyond that, the church seeks to staff its schools with people who are active Christians from other denominations **willing to uphold the Lutheran teaching in the school**' (my emphasis).

The new status of Approval to Teach was introduced, and all teachers in all Lutheran schools, including secondary schools, were expected to achieve this status within two years of appointment by completing the TOPS course. The requirement for accreditation status was extended to cover not only all primary classroom teachers but also those teachers in Lutheran secondary schools who taught Christian Studies or who were principals, deputy principals or heads of sub-schools. Those who were not already accredited were expected to achieve accreditation status by completing the GradDipTh(Ed) with Luther Seminary. Schools and principals were encouraged to include these requirements in the appointment contracts of all teachers.

In 1996 a Masters degree program was added to the post graduate courses that Luther Seminary offered teachers in Lutheran schools, providing another avenue to accreditation status.

However, in 2003 more than 600 teachers in Lutheran schools had not completed TOPS and more than 230 who should have completed the accreditation requirements had not started their study with Luther Seminary. It was also obvious that those who were undertaking the GradDipTh(Ed) or the Masters courses through external study were not experiencing the formation environment and close community life during their study that those who had studied these units on the seminary campus in the past had enjoyed.

Recognition of this fact led the Board for Lutheran Education (BLEA), which had replaced the BLS, to review the vocational formation requirements for teachers, especially given that a different type of Lutheran school, whether primary or secondary, was emerging in which most students and a growing number of staff were not Lutheran, and in some cases not Christian. It concluded that the GradDipTh(Ed) was not the most suitable course for new teachers to be undertaking, and work began on preparing a different model for the formation of teachers in Lutheran schools.

The year 2000 saw the last group of students complete the internal GradDipTh(Ed) year on campus at Luther Seminary. Bachelors of Education were now four years in length, and it was not considered practical to add another year of study before students began teaching in Lutheran schools. For those wishing to teach in Lutheran schools an Initial Teacher Education Program (ITEP) was introduced in place of the GradDipTh(Ed). ITEP later became known as the Lutheran Strand. This involved cross-crediting four–six Luther Seminary units into an education degree at Flinders University in South Australia or the Australian Catholic University campuses in Ballarat,

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<sup>5</sup> TOPS consisted of ten one and a half hour sessions which aimed to introduce teachers to why the LCA operated schools and how its theology informed the education offered in these schools. There was no assessment; rather the sessions took the general form of lecture and discussion and the length of the sessions later varied from one–two hours from school to school and leader to leader.

Victoria, and Mitchelton, Queensland, and engaging in a number of vocational formation activities. The Luther Seminary vocational parchment was obtained if the student completed both aspects of this program, and LCA accreditation status as a teacher in Lutheran schools was granted after teaching for a semester in a Lutheran school.

In 2004 Luther Seminary became Australian Lutheran College (ALC). At the time there were 82 Lutheran schools spread across Australia, employing 2500 teachers and for the first time fewer than half of these teachers were Lutheran (48%). This represents a major change from earlier years.

Year	No of schools	Prim	Sec	Teachers	Lutheran	Students	Lutheran
1967	29	23	6	193	90%	3,592	72%
1983	62	52	10	623	75%	9,956	53%
2004	82	52	12/18 COMP	2488	48%	30,000	20%

Where we are today?

So much for the historical survey. Allow me now to consider the current situation regarding the role of Lutheran schools, the church's expectations of its teachers and the training that is provided to prepare teachers for their role. All teachers in Lutheran schools have undertaken their education degrees in tertiary institutions other than ALC and have qualified for registration as teachers. The content of this training is determined by state authorities, not by the LCA or ALC.

The official document outlining the relationship between the LCA and Lutheran schools, namely 'The Lutheran Church of Australia and its schools', was adopted by the GCC in 1999, edited in 2001 and still remains the church's official policy statement. This document clearly states that Lutheran schools are one of the agencies by which the LCA carries out its ministry and mission to the people of Australia and New Zealand. It defines a Lutheran school as one 'in which the gospel of Jesus Christ informs all learning and teaching, all human relationships and all activities'.

The document indicates the purposes of Lutheran schools when it states that through its schools the church offers a program of Christian education which

- serves students, parents, the church, the community and the government by providing a quality education for the whole person
- strives for excellence in the development and creative use by all students of their God-given gifts
- equips students for a life of service to God in the church and the community
- provides an alternative to a secular, humanistic philosophy and practice of education

- includes, as core part of its curriculum, a Christian Studies program which has been developed deliberately and consciously from the perspective of what the Lutheran church believes and teaches
- involves the school community in regular Christian worship

These are certainly broader and less specifically 'Lutheran-oriented' purposes than the original aims and purposes of Lutheran schools. They definitely reflect that Lutheran schools operate in the kingdom of the left as well as the kingdom of the right.

There is no doubt that Lutheran schools are highly regarded in the general community for the quality of the education and pastoral care they offer students and their families, and I believe their Christian nature is widely recognised. But what, if anything, distinguishes them from other Christian schools? Are they distinctively Lutheran? Indeed, some would argue that these questions are not important, so long as our schools are popular and the gospel is being proclaimed in them?

In their constitutions, Lutheran schools state that they accept the Confessions of the LCA, which are contained in the Book of Concord, as their confessions, and, when installed as staff in a Lutheran school, teachers pledge to uphold the Confessions

In official statements such as 'The Lutheran Church of Australia and its schools', 'The teacher in the Lutheran school' and 'The staffing policy for Lutheran schools' the church clearly states that it expects those who teach in its schools to understand, support and be committed to upholding the teachings of the Lutheran church. However, I do not believe any of these teachings are mentioned or clearly enunciated in the statements.

While the church gives school councils and principals the responsibility of providing support and encouragement to teachers so they develop this understanding, it reserves the right to determine the appropriate theological study required of teachers, and in 'The Lutheran Church of Australia and its schools' the church commits itself to assisting them in undertaking this study. In light of this and similar statements, and bearing in mind that the church says that teachers in a Lutheran school are involved daily in the mission and ministry of the LCA, one could ask how well the church, school councils and principals have prepared those employed to staff our schools, particularly those in the new and developing schools since 1970, for this mission and ministry? What priority have they given this crucial aspect in terms of time, money and other resources? Schools give a lot of emphasis and commit significant resources to the professional development of teachers in most other areas, and rightly so, but how much time and resources are given to ensuring teachers know the key teachings of the LCA and are given the opportunity to discuss their application to education?

It should be noted that the church has always been very particular about the training that must be undertaken by those wishing to be pastors in the Lutheran Church of Australia. Called and ordained pastors are the only ones the LCA allows to carry out the ministry of word and sacrament, and these pastors are required to undertake at least five years of full-time biblical and theological study before being ordained and permitted to take up a call to a Lutheran congregation. Adrienne Jericho writes:

Lutheran schools are successful in achieving their mission when they have staff who have a commitment to the unique ethos of the school ... Thus one of the biggest challenges facing the LCA is providing teachers and ensuring ongoing theological education, delivered online and through various flexible modes. This poses a genuine problem for the LCA whose tertiary emphasis has been on the pastoral ministry with a minimum teacher preparation program. Can a church have a strong school sector without a strong tertiary sector? There is a need for the LCA to consider how it esteems and designates its teachers. (2000)

It remains a mystery that the church and school councils to this stage have not given greater emphasis to and encouragement and support for the theological training of staff in Lutheran schools, especially those who have a limited knowledge of Lutheran doctrines and teachings and yet are considered key people in contributing to the mission and ministry of the LCA through its schools. On the other hand, the Catholic church provides its teachers with an extensive program of professional development in the Catholic faith.

Is it reasonable to ask the considerable number of teachers in Lutheran schools who have not completed the appropriate theological study, to uphold the Lutheran character and teachings of the school, as the church expects?

#### Current pre-service training of teachers for Lutheran schools

The Lutheran Strand program, referred to earlier, whereby undergraduate students include a number of ALC units in their education degrees at Flinders University and campuses of ACU, has continued and been expanded to a number of other universities. There were 128 students enrolled in the Strand in 2005 and 43 graduated for service in Lutheran schools at the end of the year.<sup>6</sup>

In locations such as Adelaide, Brisbane and Ballarat vocational formation activities centring around six to eight meetings each year are organised for the students, with devotions and guest speakers. While this study and the associated formation activities provide some important preparation for the vocation of teaching in Lutheran schools, it is a far cry from the preparation that was undertaken by those who attended LTC and completed the full year of internal study.

The appropriate pre-service training of teachers for Lutheran schools should consist of three elements: the professional training that any teacher should undertake as it relates to such things as subject knowledge, pedagogy, behaviour management, and forms of assessment; the study of key biblical concepts and Lutheran doctrines and a consideration of their relation to education; and thirdly the vocational formation that is developed through being part of a community which prays and worships together, while reflecting constantly on the aims of Lutheran schooling.

Many would argue that the professional training of teachers for their role as teachers is best undertaken in the larger tertiary institutions that have the appropriate personnel and resources to provide this training at an appropriate level. There is certainly a strong argument that the spread of Lutheran schools across the country and the size of our schools system raises serious questions about the viability of establishing our own BEd at a campus of ALC in any state.

But surely a system of 112 schools and kindergartens with almost 3000 teachers and more than 30,000 students is large enough for consideration to be given to providing low-cost accommodation for students from throughout Australia to live on campus at ALC, undertake their teacher training at one of the nearby tertiary institutions, cross-credit units from ALC into their degrees and engage in an expanded number of spiritual and vocational formation activities as students of LTC did in the past.

The BLEA is proposing a review of the current Lutheran Strand program. I would want to challenge the LCA to provide stronger pre-service theological training for prospective teachers. Without such training where will the future principals and leaders, who will most determine the character and ethos of its schools, develop their understanding of what a Lutheran school is all about?

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<sup>6</sup> It is of interest that eight of these had not gained positions at the start of the 2006 school year, even though each year Lutheran schools employ about 300 additional teachers and publicly state the need for teachers who have a Lutheran education background.

Proposed in-service procedures for the spiritual formation of teachers new to Lutheran schools

I mentioned earlier that BLEA was developing an alternative model for the theological formation of staff in Lutheran schools through a program which would be more locally and regionally based, led by professional educators and linked more closely to the life of the school and the issues teachers face.

The program, called 'Pathways', has a spiritual focus for all new staff in their first year, consisting of a number of sessions within their school or region that involve sharing, exploring, reflecting and praying (not lecturing!). Topics to be covered are as follows:

1. My story, the story of my school, the LCA story
2. The story of the LCA and its schools
3. God's story with his people
4. God's story in my school community
5. God's story with each person
6. God's story in the community (world)

In the second year there is a theological focus based on a revised TOPS, while in the third year the focus is vocational and involves three half-day regional workshops for general teaching staff and the commencement of the ALC GradCertEd or equivalent study for teachers of Christian Studies and those holding certain leadership positions.

The bulk of this program is to be delivered within schools and districts by school and district leaders with some done during school time. Therefore, the words of the Board for Lutheran Secondary Schools bear repeating: 'This will involve considerable expense, but because of its importance this measure should be given high priority'.

I am confident that directors, school councils and principals want to give it that high priority and ensure that all new staff complete the program and therefore are able to 'understand and support the faith as confessed by the Lutheran church and practiced in the Lutheran school' and are 'willing to identify with, uphold and promote the Lutheran ethos of the school', in keeping with the church's statements. However, I wonder whether the various practical implications for schools in regard to time and cost have been fully appreciated. I am also concerned about the minor role assigned to ALC in this formation program.

## Conclusion

In this paper I have outlined the history of the training of teachers for Lutheran schools and particularly discussed the current expectations the LCA has of those who teach in its schools and the policies being proposed in regard to the formation and training of teachers for their role. I have pointed out the difficulties in implementing theological training programs for the many new teachers who joined the growing system of Lutheran schools in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

However, during my experience of 35 years of teaching in Lutheran secondary schools the gospel message of Christ's love for all was proclaimed daily in the schools in which I served through regular worship and devotions, through Christian Studies lessons and through the witness of many staff and students. Lutheran principals and pastors in those and other Lutheran schools certainly aimed to keep Lutheran doctrines in mind as they developed policies and practices in their schools.

As stated earlier I believe the training of teachers for Lutheran schools will be determined by the role or purpose those schools are meant to serve. If, as stated, they are to provide a Christian education in which the gospel of Jesus Christ informs all learning and teaching, all human relationships and all activities, so that the Holy Spirit is given countless opportunities to work faith

in the hearts of staff, students and other members of the school community, could it not be argued that this is the aim and purpose of any Christian school, not just those that are Lutheran. So the mystery of what makes a Lutheran school Lutheran as well as Christian remains.

I would contend that the solution to this mystery is tied up in the extent to which all learning and teaching, all human relationships and all activities in a Lutheran school are informed by the gospel of Jesus Christ as interpreted and expressed in the confessions of the Lutheran church. The centre of the confessions is the teaching of justification by grace through faith on account of Christ.

The extent to which the confessions form the basis for the pre-service and in-service training of teachers for Lutheran schools, including their implications for various aspects of schooling, inform the discussion and decision-making that take place in regard to the policies, procedures, activities and relationships within a Lutheran school and are practically incorporated into the daily life of the school, will determine whether a school is authentically Lutheran. I don't believe any other Christian denomination parallels our understanding and teachings in these areas.

The aim should not be to have every staff member become a Lutheran, but for Lutheran theology as applied to education to be understood, upheld and supported by all staff, just as the LCA's policies expect.

It is crucial that current and future principals especially have undertaken this study. Most principals during the majority of my years in Lutheran schools had experienced one or more of the following in preparation for their role as leaders in our schools:

- life-time membership of and regular attendance at a Lutheran church
- primary and/or secondary education in a Lutheran school
- study through LTC or Luther Seminary

This gave them an understanding of what a Lutheran school was based on, and they saw it as their role to ensure that policies and practices within the school reflected this understanding. I'm not sure that future principals will necessarily have this background or understanding, so the recent Millennial Principals Project (MPP) and the current Leadership Development Program (LDP) established by the BLEA are most important. I trust participants in these programs will go on to complete the Master of Education with ALC so their knowledge and understanding of Lutheran distinctives is further developed.

The teachers are key to ensuring that the gospel of Jesus Christ and the confessions of the Lutheran church inform everything that is said and done in a Lutheran school, so the challenge of ensuring that the teachers know, support and uphold the confessions is crucial if the LCA wants its schools to remain Lutheran.

Because of this I agree with Richard Hauser when he states, in the November 2002 edition of *School Link*, 'Nothing has been more crucial to their (Lutheran schools') survival than the provision of teachers who are trained in the theology of the church. Indications are that while absolutely essential to preserve the distinctive Lutheran ethos of its schools, the training of the church's teachers will continue to be a challenge for the church'.

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