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Engaging the student voice within Anglican school self-evaluation and
statutory inspection within Wales: The Lankshear Student Voice Scales Revised

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Abstract

Drawing on data provided by 4,803 year-four, year-five, and year-six students (between the ages of 8 and 11 years) attending 88 Church in Wales primary schools, this paper discusses the development of eight short scales designed to operationalise themes concerning aspects of the distinctiveness of Anglican church schools and school worship identified by the school inspection process. The eight themes include: attitude toward the general character of the school and attitude toward the religious character of the school. The data demonstrated the internal consistency reliability of these eight measures that comprise the Lankshear Student Voice Scales Revised and showed more positive attitudes to be associated with being female, with being younger, and with engaging in personal and public religious practices.

Keywords: Church in Wales, church schools, school inspection, student voices

Introduction

The Lankshear Student Voice Scales, as developed by Lankshear, Francis, and Eccles (2017) and tested by Francis, Lankshear, and Eccles (2018), were designed to support the participation of Church in Wales primary schools within the state-maintained sector in the statutory inspection requirements as appertain to schools with a religious character initiated by the Education (Schools) Act 1992. The significance of these scales needs to be set within a brief recapitulation of the history of the Anglican Church's involvement in education in Wales.

In Wales, as in England, the current provision of state-maintained education had its origin in the initiative of the Churches. The foundation of the National Society by the Established Church of England in 1811 provided the incentive and mechanism for encouraging parish churches to build schools for educating children within their local area. This Anglican initiative was quickly followed by other Churches, including the Free Churches that founded the British and Foreign School Society in 1814, and the Catholic Church that founded the Catholic Poor Schools Committee in 1847. It was not until the Education Act 1870 that the state created the mechanism to build schools independently of these voluntary societies, and then the primary aim was not to supplant church schools but to augment church-related provision in areas where the churches were failing to create sufficient schools. This historical account has been well rehearsed and documented by Cruikshank (1963), Murphy (1971), Francis (1987), and Chadwick (1997).

The major landmark in reconfiguring church schools within the state-maintained system was provided by the Education Act 1944 (Dent, 1947). By creating the distinction between voluntary aided status and voluntary controlled status, the Education Act 1944 enabled the Church to retain some schools without ongoing financial liability but with diminished rights (voluntary controlled status) and to retain other schools with some ongoing

financial obligations and with greater control (voluntary aided status). After the Education Act 1944 many Anglican schools continued to see their primary role as serving the local community, but with the right to promote denominational identity through daily collective worship in school assemblies (in the case of both aided and controlled schools) and to provide denominational religious education (throughout the school in the case of aided status and by parental request in the case of controlled status).

The major landmark in clarifying the Anglican Church's self-understanding of its rationale for continuing involvement within the state-maintained sector of schools in England and Wales was provided by the Durham Report (1970). By offering the distinction between the Church's domestic aim in education and the Church's general aim in education, the Durham Report encouraged Anglican schools to conceptualise their primary aim as serving the nation (the general aim) while recognising that some voluntary aided schools may opt to prioritise serving the children of Anglican or churchgoing families (the domestic aim).

When the Education (Schools) Act 1992 introduced a more rigorous statutory framework for school inspection, it also protected the right of schools with a religious character (a more inclusive term for church schools introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998) to take responsibility for the formal inspection of those aspects of the school under the direct responsibility of the religious foundation and the school governors. In the case of both voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools this provision referred to collective worship and to school ethos, and in the case of voluntary aided schools this provision referred also to religious education.

The development of the church-related inspection system stimulated the Anglican Church to reflect more creatively about the qualities that characterised good practice in church schools and defined the distinctive ethos in church schools. At the time of the Education (Schools) Act 1992, the schools' officer at the National Society, David W.

Lankshear, had published a formative book, *Looking for quality in a church school* (Lankshear, 1992b) alongside two other publications, *A shared vision: Education in church schools* (Lankshear, 1992a), and *Governing church schools* (Lankshear, 1992c). Reflection in these areas put Lankshear in a strong position first to offer some guidelines for the inspection process in *Preparing for inspection in a church school* (Lankshear, 1993), and then to co-author the *Inspection handbook* in a series of editions (Brown & Lankshear, 1995, 1997, 2000).

As part of its continuing response to the statutory inspection requirements within church schools, during the school year 2013/14 the Church in Wales decided to engage the student voice by inviting David W. Lankshear and colleagues to design a set of scales constructed to map areas identified by the Section 50 inspection criteria concerning aspects of the distinctiveness of the school ethos and concerning school worship. The design and development of these scales is reported by Lankshear, Francis, and Eccles (2017) drawing on data provided by 1,899 year-five and year-six students (9- to 11-year-olds), from church schools across Wales, who had participated in the two pilot projects conducted during the school years 2013-14 and 2014-15.

From among 50 items included in the questionnaire, a sequence of exploratory analyses and reliability analyses identified six sets of items (each set comprising five or six items) that mapped conceptually on to six areas identified by the Section 50 inspection criteria as discussed by Lankshear (1992b) in *Looking for quality in a church school*. These six areas were characterised as: attitude toward school ethos, attitude toward school experience, attitude toward school teachers, attitude toward relationships in school, attitude toward school and environment, and attitude toward school worship. These six scales generated alpha coefficients (Cronbach, 1951) ranging from .73 to .78, demonstrating satisfactory levels of internal consistency reliability (DeVellis, 2003).

The original intention of the Student Voice Project was to be of practical benefit to church schools in Wales in two ways. The first benefit was to provide each individual school with its own student voice profile that the school could read alongside the aggregated profile of all schools provided for the Province as a whole. The individual school profiles, read alongside the Provincial profile, were intended to help in school self-evaluation by drawing attention to specific strengths and to potential weaknesses. The individual school profiles were also intended to provide direct data that could be of value in the inspection process. The second benefit was to provide a sequence of data over a three-year period. Such data could enable the Church in Wales to monitor change in student attitude toward being educated in church schools.

Research problem

Reflection on the way in which the Lankshear Student Voice Scales were employed in the reports to the Province and to the individual schools during the first two years of the project (the first survey in the school year 2014-2015 and the second survey in the school year 2015-2016) led to two suggestions for improving the instrument. The first suggestion concerned looking closely at two of the scales that had tried to combine within one scale two ideas and in each case to replace the existing scale with two scales, allowing each item to be more fully explored. The original scale concerned with attitude toward school ethos had combined two ideas, one concerning the general character of the school and the other concerning the religious character of the school. The recommendation was to replace this original scale with two scales: attitude toward the general character of the school, and attitude toward the religious character of the school. The original scale concerned with attitude toward school and environment had combined two ideas, one concerning stewardship of creation and the other concerning stewardship of school environment. The recommendation was to replace the original scale with two scales: attitude toward stewardship of creation and

attitude toward stewardship of school environment. The second suggestion concerned looking closely at all the scales and considering whether they could be enriched by expansion from six items to seven items.

Against this background, the aim of the present study is to report on how the development of an expanded pool of items for the third year of the survey (2016-2017) provided the opportunity to respond to both suggestions. All the original items were retained in order to facilitate three comparable sets of data across the three years of the survey. At the same time, additional items were added to test the development of the Lankshear Student Voice Scales Revised.

Method

Procedure

All Church in Wales primary schools were invited to participate in a three-year project designed to assess the student voice across the three domains of attitude toward Christianity (Francis, Lankshear, & Eccles, 2017a, 2017b; Lankshear, Francis, & Eccles, 2018), spiritual health (Francis, Fisher, Lankshear, & Eccles, 2018), and school ethos (Lankshear, Francis, & Eccles, 2017; Francis, Lankshear, & Eccles, 2018). From the total of 149 Church in Wales primary schools catering for key stage two students across the six Anglican Dioceses, 88 schools participated in the student survey conducted during the third year of the project (2016-2017). The schools were asked to administer the questionnaire in normal class groups to all year-four, year-five, and year-six students throughout the schools. Students were asked not to write their name on the booklet and to complete the instrument without discussing it with their peers. They were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. The study received approval from the St Mary's Centre Ethics Committee (SMC13EC0011). All told thoroughly completed questionnaires were returned by 4,803 students within the three year groups.

Instrument

Section 50 inspection criteria were assessed by a battery of 57 items, including the 35 items employed in the Lankshear Student Voice Scales (Lankshear, Francis, & Eccles, 2017), augmented by a further 22 items. This battery of items was prefaced by the statement: These questions are about your school. Please read each sentence carefully and think ‘how true is this for me?’. Each item was assessed on the conventional five-point scale: agree strongly (5), agree (4), not certain (3), disagree (2), and disagree strongly (1).

Worship attendance was assessed by the question, ‘Do you go to a place of worship (e.g. church or mosque)?’ rated on a five-point scale: weekly (5), at least once a month (4), sometimes (3), once or twice a year (2), and never (1).

Personal prayer was assessed by the question, ‘Do you pray when you are on your own?’ rated on a five-point scale: daily (5), at least once a week (4), sometimes (3), once or twice a year (2), and never (1).

Participants

The 4,803 participants comprised 1,421 year-four students (726 boys and 695 girls), 1,729 year-five students (885 boys and 844 girls), and 1,653 year-six students (813 boys and 840 girls). In terms of worship attendance, 27% never attended church, 15% attended once or twice a year, 34% attended sometimes, 9% attended at least once a month, and 16% attended weekly. In terms of personal prayer 33% never prayed, 10% prayed once or twice a year, 34% prayed sometimes, 9% prayed at least once a week, and 14% prayed daily.

Data analysis

The data were analysed by the SPSS statistical package, employing the frequency, reliability, and correlation routines.

Results

- insert table 1 about here -

A series of reliability analyses identified the best grouping of items to build on the foundations put in place by the original Lankshear Student Voice Scales and to address the specific aims of the project in terms of re-shaping these scales. The data presented in table 1 presents an overview of the internal consistency reliability of these eight new scales in terms of the alpha coefficients for the three year groups (year four, year five, and year six) considered separately. Even among the youngest age group, the scales generated alpha coefficients ranging from .76 to .86, an improvement on the original scales which were reported by Francis, Lankshear, and Eccles (2018) as recording alpha coefficients between .70 and .76 among the youngest age group. Among these new scales the alpha coefficients are slightly higher among year-five students (ranging from .79 to .88) and among year-six students (ranging from .83 to .90).

- insert table 2 about here -

The second step in exploring these new scales was to examine the students' responses to the individual items comprising the eight scales. Table 2 presents these individual items together with two core statistics: the correlation between the individual item and the sum of the other items within the scale, for each of the three year groups separately, and the percentage endorsement of the item expressed as the sum of the agree and agree strongly responses for the total sample. The correlations demonstrate how well the individual items covary with the other items within the set and how the pattern of correlations remains consistent among the different age groups of students. The percentage endorsement demonstrates the overall level of response of the student body. Each of these eight scales will be discussed briefly in light of the percentage endorsement presented in table 2.

The scale concerned with *attitude toward the general character of the school* found that around nine out of every ten students agreed that their school is a really good school (90%), that their school is a really caring school (88%), and that their school is a really

welcoming school (88%). The proportion dropped to around eight out of every ten students who agreed that their school treats every child with respect (83%), that their school treats every child kindly (81%), and that their school is really friendly school (80%). The proportion dropped further to 75% who agreed that their school treats every child fairly.

The scale concerned with *attitude toward the religious character of the school* found that at least nine out of every ten students agreed that God is very important in their school (94%), that Jesus is very important in their school (93%), that prayer is very important to their school (91%), that church is very important in their school (91%), and that the Bible is very important in their school (91%). The proportion dropped to 83% who agreed that the Christian festivals are very important in their school.

The scale concerned with *attitude toward the experience of school* found that eight out of every ten students agreed that the rules are fair in their school (84%), that their school is a safe place (84%), that their school looks good (82%), and that their school is a clean place (77%). The proportions dropped to 74% who agreed that they like coming to their school, to 70% who agreed that they can be themselves in their school, and to 65% who agreed that their schools is a peaceful place.

The scale concerned with *attitude toward the teachers and staff* found that around nine out of every ten students agreed that the teachers in their school care a lot for the school (93%), that the teachers in their school care a lot for all the children (92%), that the teachers in their school care a lot for each other (90%), and that the teachers in their school care a lot for the world around us (89%). The proportions drop to around eight out of every ten students who agree that in their school they can go to the teachers when they are unhappy (82%), that they can go to the grown-ups when they are unhappy (80%), that when they do well the teachers praise them (77%), and that when they do well the grown-ups praise them (77%).

The scale concerned with *attitude toward relationships in school* found that more than nine out of every ten students agreed that their school teaches them to respect other people (94%), that their school teaches them to respect other people's things (93%), that their school teaches them to care for other people (93%), and that caring for others is very important in their school (93%). The proportions drop to 85% who agree that we care a lot for each other in their school, to 82% who agree that we value each other at their school, and to 77% who agree that people care for them in their school.

The scale concerned with *attitude toward the stewardship of creation* found that nine out of ten students agreed that their school teaches them to respect the world around them (91%) and that their school teaches them to respect wonderful things (90%). Around eight out of every ten students agree that their school teaches them not to waste things (83%), and that their school teaches them to respect things that grow (82%). The proportion falls to three quarters of the students who agree that their school teaches them to take care of plants (75%) and to take care of animals (75%). The proportion falls further to two thirds of the students who agree that their school teaches them to take care of insects (64%).

The scale concerned with *attitude toward stewardship of the school* found that at least eight out of every ten students agreed that at their school they are proud of the school grounds (84%) and that at their school they take pride in the school displays (87%), in the classrooms (86%), in the school looking tidy (86%), in the school looking good (84%), in the school looking clean (83%), and in the school hall (80%).

The scale concerned with *attitude toward school worship* found that around seven out of every ten students agreed that in assembly they enjoy visits from the vicar (71%), that they enjoy the songs they sing (70%) and that they enjoy being with the whole school (68%). Around seven out of every ten students also agree that in assemblies being quiet and still is important to them (69%) and that having prayers is important to them (69%). The proportions

drop to 66% who agree that listening to the Bible is important to them, and to 63% who agree that singing is important to them.

- insert table 3 about here -

The third step in exploring these new scales was to examine the correlation between each of the eight scales and two personal factors (sex and age) and two religious factors (worship attendance and personal prayer). These data are presented in table 3. In terms of personal factors, these data demonstrate that both sex and age are significant predictors of individual differences across all eight attitudinal areas. Girls hold a statistically significant more positive attitude toward the distinctive qualities of their church school than boys. Older students hold a significantly less positive attitude toward the distinctive qualities of their church school than younger students. In terms of religious factors, these data demonstrate that both frequency of worship attendance and frequency of personal prayer are significant predictors of individual differences across all eight attitudinal areas. Students who attend worship services and students who pray hold a statistically significant more positive attitude toward the distinctive qualities of their church schools than students who do not attend worship services and students who do not pray. It needs to be noted, however, that although these correlations are statistically significant, the effect sizes are small.

Conclusion

Lankshear, Francis, and Eccles (2017) reported on the development and testing of the Lankshear Student Voice Scales, a set of five six-item scales and one five-item scale designed to engage year-four, year-five, and year-six students attending Church in Wales primary schools in recording their experience of the distinctive characteristics of church schools as identified by the Section 50 inspection criteria. The purpose of these scales was to provide evidence for the inspection process, to offer data of value for individual school self-assessment, and to allow the Church to monitor trends within church schools. As well as

being of practical benefit for the schools themselves the data generated by these instruments have also been harnessed to contribute the wider literature on church schools, as exemplified by Francis, Lankshear, and Eccles (2018).

Reflection on the way in which the Lankshear Student Voice Scales were employed in the reports to the Province and to the individual schools during the first two years of the project (the first survey in the school year 2014-2015 and the second survey in the school year 2015-2016) led to two suggestions for improving the instrument. The first suggestion concerned looking closely at two of the scales that had tried to combine within one scale two ideas and in each case to replace the existing scale with two scales, allowing each idea to be more fully explored. The second suggestion concerned looking closely at all the scales and considering whether they could be enriched by expansion from six to seven items. The present study has described and examined the development and testing of the Lankshear Student Voice Scales Revised, introducing an expanded set of eight scales with seven (and in one case eight) items, drawing on data provided by 4,803 year-four, year-five, and year-six students (between the ages of 8 and 11 years) attending 88 Church in Wales primary schools.

Three main conclusions can be drawn from the data presented in the study. First, the new set of eight scales functioned in exactly the same way as the early set of six scales in terms of the correlations with personal factors (age and sex) and religious factors (worship attendance and personal prayer) as reported by Francis, Lankshear, and Eccles (2018). Higher scores on each scale were recorded by girls, by younger students, by students who attended worship services and by students who prayed. Here is evidence for the continuity between the two sets of measures.

Second, the new set of eight scales all reported higher levels of internal consistency reliability, even among year-four students, compared with the original scales as reported by

Francis, Lankshear, and Eccles (2018). Here is evidence that the new set of scales possesses improved levels of reliability.

Third, the detailed examination of the response to the larger number of individual items; now distributed among eight rather than six scales, provides a richer and better focused account of the distinctive characteristics of church schools as identified by the Section 50 inspection criteria. Here is evidence that the new set of scales may be of greater benefit both to the inspection process and to the process of school self-evaluation.

On these grounds the Lankshear Student Voice Scales Revised may be commended for further use.

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Table 1

Scale properties

	N items	Alpha coefficients		
		Yr 4	Yr 5	Yr 6
Attitude toward the general character of the school	7	.86	.88	.90
Attitude toward the religious character of the school	7	.79	.87	.88
Attitude toward the experience of school	7	.79	.79	.84
Attitude toward the teachers and staff	8	.81	.81	.86
Attitude toward relationships in school	7	.76	.81	.85
Attitude toward the stewardship of creation	7	.80	.79	.83
Attitude toward the stewardship of the school	7	.81	.83	.86
Attitude toward school worship	7	.85	.87	.88

Table 2

Lankshear Student Voice Scales Revised

	All %	Yr 4 r	Yr 5 r	Yr 6 r
<i>Attitude toward the general school character</i>				
My school is a really good school	90	.53	.55	.64
My school is a really caring school	88	.62	.67	.72
My school is a really friendly school	80	.64	.66	.68
My schools is a really welcoming school	88	.59	.66	.68
My school treats every child fairly	75	.64	.68	.73
My school treats every child with respect	83	.65	.74	.77
My school treats every child kindly	81	.69	.69	.71
<i>Attitude toward the religious school character</i>				
Worship is very important in my school	91	.47	.61	.61
Prayer is very important in my school	92	.52	.67	.66
God is very important in my school	94	.56	.68	.72
Jesus is very important in my school	93	.55	.73	.74
Church is very important in my school	91	.62	.67	.69
The Bible is very important in my school	90	.55	.71	.70
Christian festivals are very important in my school	83	.42	.52	.53
<i>Attitude toward the experience of school</i>				
In my school the rules are fair	84	.47	.47	.52
In my school I can be myself	70	.48	.43	.54
My school is a peaceful place	65	.51	.56	.61
My school is a safe place	84	.58	.59	.67
My school looks good	82	.55	.53	.60
My school is a clean place	77	.53	.56	.65
I like coming to my school	74	.58	.54	.59
<i>Attitude toward the teachers and staff</i>				
The teachers in my school care a lot for all the children	92	.50	.52	.56
The teachers in my school care a lot for each other	90	.48	.46	.52
The teachers in my school care a lot for the world around us	89	.46	.50	.58
The teachers in my school care a lot for the school	93	.49	.51	.59
When I do well in my school the teachers praise me	77	.59	.55	.61
When I do well in my school the grown-ups praise me	77	.58	.56	.64
In my school I can go to the teachers when I am unhappy	82	.54	.57	.66
In my school I can go to the grown-ups when I am unhappy	80	.61	.58	.66
<i>Attitude toward relationships in school</i>				
My school teaches me to respect other people	94	.35	.47	.50
My school teaches me to respect other people's things	93	.40	.44	.57
My school teaches me to care for other people	93	.53	.56	.68
At my school we value each other	82	.53	.59	.66
Caring for others is very important in my school	93	.54	.60	.66
In my school we care a lot for each other	85	.59	.65	.69
In my school people care for me	77	.49	.56	.55

Attitude toward the stewardship of creation

My school teaches me to respect things that grow	82	.51	.56	.56
My school teaches me to respect wonderful things	90	.45	.48	.57
My school teaches me to respect the world around us	91	.52	.46	.59
My school teaches me to take care of plants	75	.65	.63	.67
My school teaches me to take care of animals	75	.59	.54	.58
My school teaches me to take care of insects	64	.55	.58	.60
My school teaches me not to waste things	83	.49	.46	.49

Attitude toward the stewardship of the school

In my school we take pride in our school grounds	84	.46	.50	.53
In my school we take pride in our classrooms	86	.52	.51	.60
In my school we take pride in our school displays	87	.49	.53	.56
In my school we take pride in our school hall	80	.56	.57	.61
In my school we take pride in our school looking tidy	86	.60	.64	.70
In my school we take pride in our school looking clean	83	.62	.64	.69
In my school we take pride in our school looking good	84	.60	.64	.67

Attitude toward school worship

In assemblies I enjoy being with the whole school	68	.58	.62	.61
In assemblies I enjoy visits from the vicar	71	.53	.60	.65
In assemblies I enjoy the songs we sing	70	.60	.62	.68
In assemblies singing is important to me	63	.60	.63	.66
In assemblies being quiet and still is important to me	69	.60	.62	.62
In assemblies listening to the Bible is important to me	66	.64	.71	.75
In assemblies having prayers is important to me	69	.67	.71	.72

Table 3

Correlations between Lankshear Student Voice Scales Revised and personal and religious factors

	Correlation coefficients			
	Sex	Age	Church	Prayer
Attitude toward the general character of the school	.11***	-.14***	.06***	.10***
Attitude toward the religious character of the school	.06***	-.12***	.15***	.21***
Attitude toward the experience of school	.16***	-.09***	.06***	.10***
Attitude toward the teachers and staff	.05***	-.16***	.06***	.11***
Attitude toward relationships in school	.08***	-.14***	.06***	.10***
Attitude toward the stewardship of creation	.05**	-.17***	.06***	.13***
Attitude toward the stewardship of the school	.07***	-.12***	.05***	.11***
Attitude toward school worship	.15***	-.21***	.20***	.32***

Note: ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$