

HINTS FOR NEW THESIS EXAMINERS

Writing the report

1. Provide a brief synopsis of each chapter to show you have read it all—but not 17 page summary
2. May need to read twice, more could indicate problems
3. Look at criteria and respond to these, eg originality of contribution
4. **Remember this is NOT your thesis**
 - a. Reason you were chosen could be area of research and/or research approach
 - b. Critically examine the thesis within the paradigm of research used and the research question addresses
 - c. Consider if 'enough' has been done to merit the degree
5. Try to provide some positive and unqualified comments that the candidate can use for promotion, job applications etc, so separate praise from criticisms
 - a. Always provide some praise unless thesis should not have been submitted
6. Separate in constructive criticism what revisions are necessary for thesis approval, versus what may need to be taken into account for future publications
7. Encourage publication, perhaps suggest aspects of thesis that could be published separately
8. Make own judgment on extent to which you want to note typos etc.
9. Congratulate supervisors if thesis is well done

Grading the thesis

10. Interpreting the criteria, eg, PhD GU: *original and significant contribution*; standard of literary presentation satisfactory; methodology appropriate and effective; competence in survey of literature; suitable for publication.
11. Look at options: do you really want/need to see it again
12. Top 10% etc: you're on your own ...

CANDIDATE'S NAME:

THESIS TITLE:

EXAMINER:

(Examiner #)

SAMPLE ONLY

For information about the standard for the award of the degree please consult the attached document 'Notes for the Guidance of Examiners of Doctoral Submissions'.

Please answer the following questions about the thesis. You are asked to provide more detailed comments on the accompanying General Report Form.

THE THESIS

In your opinion -

- | | | |
|-----|--|--|
| 1 | Does the thesis make an original and significant contribution to knowledge and understanding of the field of study with which it is concerned? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 2 | Is the standard of literary presentation in the thesis satisfactory? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 3 | Is the methodology applied in the candidate's research effective and appropriate for the thesis topic and the degree sought? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 4 | Does the thesis reflect competence in the survey of literature and documentation of statements | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 5 | Is the thesis suitable for publication as a book or in a learned journal - | |
| 5.1 | in the form submitted? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 5.2 | with modifications? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |

RECOMMENDATION ON RESULTS OF EXAMINATION

Please recommend an overall result for the examination by ticking the appropriate box below.

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-----|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 1 | The candidate should be awarded the degree without the requirement for revision or further examination |
| OR | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 2 | The candidate should be awarded the degree, subject to minor revisions being completed as follows: |
| | 2.1 | typographical, referencing or formatting errors as specified in the General Report Form completed to the satisfaction of the Chairperson of Examiners |
| OR | | |
| | 2.2 | additions to arguments, review of literature, interpretation of findings and any typographical, referencing or formatting errors as specified in the General Report Form completed to the satisfaction of the Chairperson of Examiners |
| OR | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 3 | The candidate be required to present for an oral defence |

PLEASE TURN PAGE

OR

- 4 The thesis does not meet the standard expected for the degree but the candidate be permitted to re-submit the thesis for examination to the examiners after:

☐ 4.1 re-writing one or more sections of the thesis in light of the examiner's comments specified in the General Report Form

OR

☐ 4.2 undertaking further work and revising the thesis to reflect the additional work

OR

☐ 4.3 in addition to 4.1 or 4.2 above, presenting for an oral examination

OR

- 5 The candidate should be considered for the award of a masters degree:

☐ 5.1 without the requirement for revision or further examination

OR

☐ 5.2 subject to revisions specified in the General Report Form being completed to the satisfaction of the Chairperson of Examiners

OR

☐ 5.3 subject to re-examination after completion of revisions specified in the General Report Form

OR

- ☐ 6 The thesis should be rejected, and the degree not be awarded

Examiners are requested to provide justification for their recommendation in the accompanying 'Doctoral and MPhil Examination Report Form'.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The University's normal practice is to provide the candidate with copies of the examiners' reports with the examiners' identities expunged. A candidate will be informed of the name of the examiner responsible for each report after the examination is finalised.

DATE20....

SIGNATURE

POSITION

INSTITUTION

DETAILED REPORT.

The thesis has made a valuable contribution to knowledge about the way in which young children process addition facts and has provided new evidence about the relationship between this processing and children's success on more complex arithmetic tasks.

The candidate first made a detailed and critical analysis of the literature. She showed that previous research had neither established the extent to which automaticity of addition facts had been achieved by young school children nor convincingly demonstrated the effect of automaticity on the successful completion of more complex tasks. The study was carefully designed to investigate these questions. Further, it attempted to determine the role of intervention in fostering automaticity.

When the initial investigation found that very few of the 130 children, from grades 2 to 6, had achieved automaticity of addition facts, the candidate showed ingenuity in devising a measure of processing efficiency. Using a subset of 20 children, six efficiency levels were derived. These were based on the child's average time to process addition facts and on the predominant strategy which the child verbally reported. This aspect of the research demonstrates originality and insight and is worthy of international publication. The candidate may also extend her research by replicating her results with other groups of children and examining further the extent of variability in strategy use and its relationship to previous experience (both instructional and social).

In the second part of the study, the candidate demonstrated that inefficient processing of addition facts was related to inaccurate performance on more complex addition tasks. Although researchers have discussed the implications of inefficient processing of number facts for successful performance on complex tasks, this effect has not been demonstrated previously. It is especially interesting since the candidate found that addition errors, rather than algorithmic errors, were the primary cause of children's mistakes.

Please attach additional pages of your report securely.

The third part of the study involved an intervention in which the candidate attempted to foster automaticity of addition facts. It is not surprising that this short term intervention was unsuccessful in changing the children's strategies. It is perhaps surprising, however, that the candidate has argued that this demonstrates that direct instruction is "clearly not the answer" (p.260). This seems to be at odds with the finding that algorithms e.g. carrying were well established, perhaps automatized. The candidate has also attributed the achievement of automaticity to home experience in the case of at least one child but seems hesitant about arguing the case for school experiences. The conclusion that children develop their own strategies and that mathematically able children develop the more efficient strategies seems to need more qualification. This is my only reservation (a minor one) about the candidate's discussion which overall demonstrated a critical appreciation of the results and their relationship to ongoing research questions.

In summary, this study was well planned, efficiently organized, and competently reported. There are only a few minor errors which the candidate may prefer to correct before permanent binding.

Minor corrections:

In this copy of the thesis (2), the first page of the table of contents is misplaced.

p 85, line 8, *students* (apostrophe is missing)

p 91, 4.3, line 3, *strategieswere*

p 93, line 1, *on on*

p 118, 3rd last line, *werere*

p 139, line 7, *could be* (is there a *not* missing?)

p 157, line 4, *differsed*

I would also suggest that the clusters on p 135 be reported in the same order as the classifications on p 136.

Comments MEd **Ms Helen Egeberg**

This is a very good piece of research showing the competence of the candidate in understanding complex theoretical issues, previous research in the area, and considerable data collection. It was difficult to determine the grade. I would place it at the high end of the Distinction range. It is to be hoped that the candidate will continue with doctoral studies and pursue further work in this important area. The candidate has demonstrated the strong research skills and overall conduct and reporting of a project that are necessary for such work.

General Comments

The candidate has investigated a significant, and as her data demonstrate, an ongoing issue — student difficulties with the basic mathematical skills of addition and basic facts. Further, the focus on high school age students highlights the importance of considering the needs of and further intervention with students of this age. The thesis is sited within a cognitive model of learning including memory retention, conceptual understanding and strength of associative links.

The candidate provided a strong review of literature that was well-written and easy to follow. The review could have been enhanced through a search of theses and dissertations through Proquest, using for example, the search terms ((children) AND learning difficulties) AND (addition facts) to highlight any work that was particularly relevant to this study. Research does exist that may not have appeared in journals. I am aware of two dissertations through The University of Queensland by Maureen Finnane, including a PhD on 'The role of fluency in mathematical development: Factors associated with early learning difficulties in mathematics'. However, a much more substantial review would be inappropriate for a thesis at this level. Perhaps the candidate will explore work through this avenue for future studies.

The study comprised two parts: an examination and identification of students whose performance on the addition facts was low for their age and grade level; an intervention, following Siegler's theory of deliberately building associative strength in memory through deliberate counting strategies to improve likelihood of fact retrieval. The two parts were competently undertaken and presented and demonstrate that the candidate has strong potential research skills.

The results of the study demonstrated through a small number of case studies what appears to be an enduring truth: the persistence of difficulties in basic addition for some students and the resilience of these difficulties to intervention. The thesis has highlighted that a processing issue occurs for the Year 8 students with poor numeracy achievement outcomes (see p. 108) and that this in part may be due to reliance on addition fact skills normally associated with students in Year 2.

However, as the candidate noted, a longer intervention time using the design in this study may yield different results. While results were not evident in this study, the graphs in Figure 40 do show some change. Certainly, some effect for Samantha on p. 106 appears evident. A further research project could be to investigate the effectiveness of direct instruction for retrieval, decomposition and mixed strategies for these students, as such instruction may not have occurred between Years 2 or 3, and their current Year level. A further consideration could be the inclusion of facts with 0 and 1 as addends as these may have shed more light on procedural bugs for the students.

The recommendations that complete the study are sensible and practical recommendations for practice that could improve learning outcomes for students such as those who participated in the study.

Other comments:

Two comments relate to the need in research to consider and present alternative explanations for data, even when interpreting in the light of hypotheses and the theoretical model. For example,

- a. P. 97, the discussion of procedural bugs: the errors made by students could also be the result of losing track while counting, consistent with exceeding working memory.
- b. P. 109 para 2, last sentence: the opposite interpretation is also common in research in this area — that slow RTS indicates that students are counting not retrieving facts.

Minor comments for future publication

1. It is standard APA practice that if a reference has more than 5 authors, only the first cited with et al., even on first citation.
2. In discussion of previous research studies, such as Verschaffel and Ghesquiere (p. 12) it is helpful to provide a little more information such as the number of students identified in each group and the procedure for determining 'clear difference' (para 3, line 1). For example, are numbers small and interpretation based on absolute values, or are numbers sufficient for calculation of effect sizes etc.

Editorial changes

The thesis is well-presented. A few typographical or editorial errors were noted and these are presented below. The candidate should also undertake a final check of the References section. Errors in this section are not noted below but some inconsistencies in capitalisation of titles and other minor errors were noted.

- P. 5 para 2 line 7 'to two' delete 'to'
- P. 7 para 3 line 2 'lead' should be 'led'
- P.12 para 2 line 4, delete first 'were'
- P. para line it's
- P. 27 Beirne-Smith, last comparison, which group did better? Provide an amendment
- P. 107 para 2 line 1 change 'highlight' to 'highlights'
- P. 111 para 1 line 6 'It recognises that', delete 'that'
- P. 114 para 2 line 5 '&' should be 'and' in text

EXAMINER'S SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION (PhD & MPhil)
First Examination



**THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND**
AUSTRALIA

1. Candidate's Details

Name UQ Student Number
Program ☒ PhD ☐ MPhil School/Institute

2. Examiner's Details

Examiner's Name
Examiner's Email Address

3. Assessment of Thesis

I Recommend:

☐

No changes

The candidate be awarded the degree without further changes.

☒

Minor changes

The candidate the awarded the degree without further examination after minor changes have been made to the satisfaction of the Chair of Examiners and the Dean of the Graduate School.

☐

Major changes

The candidate be awarded the degree without further examination after major changes have been made to the satisfaction of the Chair of Examiners and the Dean of the Graduate School.

☐

Major changes that I wish to review

The candidate be awarded the degree after major changes have been made to the satisfaction of the relevant Examiner, the Chair of Examiners (if necessary) and the Dean of the Graduate School.

☐

Revise & resubmit for re-examination

The candidate not yet be awarded the degree, but be allowed to resubmit a revised thesis after a further period of research, substantial organisation or reconceptualisation. The thesis will be re-examined, where possible, by the original Examiners.

4. Other Information

Please Indicate the number of theses you have assessed (not including this thesis) and the number of candidates you have supervised to completion at or above the level of this program (doctoral only for the PhD, doctoral and masters for the MPhil).

| | | | | |
|------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 0 to 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> | Theses assessed | <input type="checkbox"/> | Completed candidates |
| 2 to 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> | Theses assessed | <input type="checkbox"/> | Completed candidates |
| 6 to 10 | <input type="checkbox"/> | Theses assessed | <input type="checkbox"/> | Completed candidates |
| 11 or more | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Theses assessed | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Completed candidates |

Of all the theses I have read at this level, this thesis is:

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | One of the best (In the top 10%) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Better than average (In the 10+ to 30% range) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | About average (in the 30+ to 70% range) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Worse than average (in the 70+ to 90% range) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | One of the worst (in the bottom 10%) |

- I certify that I reviewed the thesis examination guidelines.
- I acknowledge that this thesis was sent to me for the sole purpose of examination and is a privileged document carrying obligations to preserve and protect its confidentiality.
- I understand that I may be asked to re-examine this thesis if the Dean's decision on the outcome of the examination is that it must be revised and resubmitted.
- I have expressed any additional concerns in an attached letter and/or e-mail.

Thesis
Examiner

PROFESSOR J. JOY CUMMINS

Name and Title



Signature

4 June 2012

Date

Please complete and send fully endorsed form to thesis@gradschool.uq.edu.au or to the Graduate School, The University of Queensland along with your detailed report on the thesis.

Comments: PhD thesis Robert Culver

The candidate has presented an interesting analytical thesis in 12 chapters. Chapter 1 provides an Overview and situates the thesis within a philosophical stance. Chapter 2 provides a perspective on schooling. Chapters 3 and 4 provide an overview of the concept of legal negligence in Australian law. Chapter 5 argues that US rulings in the area (or failure to rule) should not influence Australian law, although I do not share the candidate's concerns that they could. Chapters 6 and 7 lay the groundwork for consideration of a specific case in Australian law through a variety of causes of action, but predominantly related to a claim of negligence. Chapters 8 to 11 examine the case in law and policy. Chapter 12 provides the conclusion and summary for the thesis.

The introduction and early chapters make clear the orientation of the candidate. At times, in the context of the critique of current systems, the discourse presents its own rightness of thought that verges on dogma or polemic and representation of interpretation information that bears their own hegemonic overtones.

To examine this thesis overall, then, required examination of the conceptual development of the topic, the presentation of a sustained and informed argument, demonstration of original scholarship, and contribution to the field. Overall, it does present a sustained scholarly and well-informed thesis on legal responsibilities for the provision of adequate and appropriate education for young people. It brings an impressive breadth of reading and synthesis of analysis and philosophy to create a multifaceted examination of the central topic. While a comment on the writing style is made below, the candidate does employ a nice turn of phrase and metaphor at times, such as the 'sedimentary layer' on p. 133. The thesis is original and will provide further thought for others. The candidate should explore venues for publishing from the thesis to widen dissemination.

I will comment on two concerns that I had with the thesis. These are not areas that need revision in the thesis but should be considered for further publication.

First, while I am sympathetic to many of the tenets presented in the thesis, I found the discussion in Chapter 2 on schooling made claims that were not justified by evidence and appeared to generalise from the worst of US education practice to Australian contexts. For example, the comment (p.33) that litigation could be supported by the 'gratuitous evidence of a collected national performance data' shows lack of understanding of the inadequacy of Australian data for such a purpose. Australian data are completely different from US data. Further, the discussion shows little recognition of more recent trends in Australian education policy that address several of the concerns raised. However, it is accepted that the main purpose of this chapter is to show the responsibility of the state for 'adequate' education of children who must compulsorily attend schooling and receive the education deemed to be suitable for them, in the context where much policy indicates the goals of schooling are to prepare for employment for the individual's and common good, and to identify a remediable loss as employment capacity and earnings. The school should be held responsible (p. 58, last paragraph). The

candidate may wish to reexamine the quality of argument in Chapter 2 and clarify representation of schooling as either global, US or Australian in any further publications.

The second concern that emerged from the thesis is, as in the above note, a more general uneasy resolution of whether the overall thesis has an international or Australian focus. Clearly, a scholarly work such as this is expected to contribute to international knowledge and on most fronts this does. However, analysis of law within a jurisdiction, where the closing chapters of the thesis are directed, requires more careful considerations, even within philosophical and theoretical analyses of the nature of law. Discussion of many issues in the thesis do represent analysis of global trends.

However, other aspects focus on US-centred discussion on education and law cases, although the focus of Chapter 5 is to disclaim the relevance of US arguments to potential Australian legal challenges on the basis of educational negligence due to administrative error—presented as the misdiagnosis and placement of a student and failure to monitor, with the subsequent use of set of facts from a US case to consider different applications of Australian law. For example, on p.97, the first quote is from the National Research Council of the US. What is the relevance of this for the discussion for Australian context? It would be worth examining statements by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) to see if such expectations do flow to Australian contexts. The paragraph that follows the NRC quote is US, not Australian, context.

The candidate has chosen to use the facts of the US-case *Hoffman* to examine potential negligence and other causes of action in Australian law. There is an irony in choosing this case. The candidate has provided only a brief discussion of discrimination on pp. 186-7. As a student with an identifiable disability (speech/communication), under the Australian Disability Standards, Hoffman would be able to demonstrate that the Standards—which require appropriate assessment, placement, program through consultation with the student and/or Associates—had been breached. This in turn would make a claim likely to be successful under the Australian *Disability Discrimination Act* (1992). The core issue in *Hoffman* was the use of an inappropriate test for the child (which would also fail a *Bolam*-based challenge today). It would have been worth noting this, and considering the extension of facts to a child who had been placed in the same conditions as Hoffman purely on the basis of physical features, that is, a child who would not be protected by discrimination law, or a child that was merely quiet (but not to an extent that indicated social-emotional disorders) and overlooked by teachers or considered, in educational terms, 'thick'. What of the practices of long ago when many older primary school boys were given gardening duties until they reached the school-leaving age? Could this be justified as meeting education for employment or denying opportunity for the student to learn and attain other educational and employment outcomes?

Finally, the candidate could have paid more attention in the thesis to more recent English dyslexia cases, if only as evidence of the floodgates that have opened and

how the courts have attempted to shut these, or to the US case *Snow v State of New York*, that was similar on the facts to other educational malpractice claims but allowed to proceed on the basis the defendant was a paramedic, and the case involved medical negligence. However, these might be considered for future publications, and do not detract from the extensive discussion on more expansive grounds in this thesis.

Minor corrections (required)

Although some sentences required several readings to resolve their structure, the thesis has been carefully prepared and proofread. Few errors were noted. The following corrections should be made prior to submission of the final thesis. It was noted that use of commas and sentence structures were idiosyncratic at times, only some are of sufficient concern to mention here.

- p. 45: paragraph 'Immediate, latent ...', third last line, 'Resnik' should be 'Resnick'. Also requires change in Reference list.
- pp. 62-63: last paragraph and first paragraph respectively. The marrying of a statement on ADR with a US case quote is not appropriate. US cases go to trial, in Australia few do. The ADR is definitely comment from an Australian context. The suggestion is that the first sentence of the first paragraph on p. 63 should continue in the last paragraph of p. 62, and the *Donohue* discussion should start as a fresh point.
- p. 75: line 4, the second closing parenthesis is missing after (UK).
- p. 98: first line, last paragraph, the comma after 'warning' is not needed.
- p. 113: first paragraph line 2: '... reminds us that whereas ...' delete 'whereas' to make a sentence.
- p. 122: line 3, 'practise' should be 'practice'.
- p. 131: discussion of the Bolam test, second paragraph, last sentence. The Bolam test only requires sufficient practitioners to support an adequate standard of professional competence, not a singular approach or 'unison', and different approaches can be accepted if supported (see also s 50 of the *Civil Liability Act 2002* (NSW)). This sentence should be rewritten.
- p. 136: second paragraph, fourth last line, 'fist' should be 'first'. This error also occurred in the discussion of *Donoghue v Stevenson*.
- p. 138: first full paragraph, line 3, 'Standford' should be 'Stanford'.



University of Southern Queensland

(CRICOS Provider No. 00244B|QLD/02225M NSW)

EXAMINER'S REPORT – HIGHER DEGREE DISSERTATION

Please complete after reference to the documentation provided for the information of examiners detailed below

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Examiner Name: | PROFESSOR JOY CUMMINGS |
| Examiner Address: | GRIFFITH GRADUATE RESEARCH SCHOOL, GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY |
| Candidate Student No: | |
| Candidate Family Name: | KUI |
| Candidate Given Name: | KIM TEH |
| Program: | PHD |
| Dissertation Title: | SCHOOLS & THE LAW: ... SINGAPORE |

| | | YES | NO |
|---|---|-----|----|
| 1 | I am willing to have my identity revealed to the supervisor | ✓ | |
| 2 | I am willing to have my identity revealed to the candidate | ✓ | |
| 3 | (Australian examiners only) I would be available to participate in an oral examination if it were considered necessary | ✓ | |

| | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 4 | SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION ON DISSERTATION After examination of the above dissertation (and the supporting papers, if any) I recommend: (tick one box only) | |
| 4.1 | That the dissertation be accepted as satisfactory for the award of the degree | ✓ |
| 4.2 | That the dissertation be accepted as satisfactory for the award of the degree subject to the completion of specified minor revisions to the satisfaction of the University of Southern Queensland (These revisions might involve minor editorial changes, improvement of expression, better presentation of data, etc. In some cases, where English is the candidate's second language, there might be the need for considerable editing.) | |
| 4.3 | That one or more sections of the dissertation be rewritten prior to the resubmission of the dissertation for re-examination (These revisions might include structural changes to the dissertation and/or revisions on the basis of conceptual, methodological or analytical discussion of the data.) | |
| 4.4 | That the dissertation be rejected and the program not be awarded | |

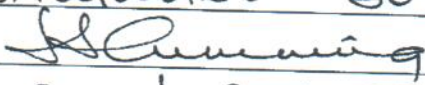
The grounds for my recommendation are set out on the following pages of this report.

Attach your report on the dissertation to this proforma. Please state concisely the grounds on which the recommendation is based and provide sufficiently detailed comments and suggestions to enable the University to gauge the quality of the dissertation. Comments on the following would be appreciated:

- The extent to which the candidate has demonstrated:
 1. Originality
 2. Critical insight
 3. Capacity to carry out independent research
- The extent of the contribution to knowledge made by the dissertation and, in particular, its contribution to the understanding of the subject with which it deals.
- The suitability of the dissertation for publication.

(The University of Southern Queensland does allow part or all of the body of a dissertation submitted for examination to be in the exact form of already published material providing that the work is presented as a coherent dissertation and that it was produced during the period of candidature. Candidates are required to state their exact contribution where joint authorship is involved.)

Guidance for the revision of any textual errors referred to in the examiner's summary recommendation should be included. When the recommendation is that the candidate revise and submit the dissertation for re-examination, it is particularly important to give sufficiently specific indications of the nature of the required revisions.

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Examiner Name (printed): | JACQUELINE JOY COMMING |
| Examiner Signature: |  |
| Date: | 20 July 2008 |

Please return your report and the dissertation to:

The Office of Research and Higher Degrees
The University of Southern Queensland
TOOWOOMBA QLD 4350

This thesis provides a concise and interesting discussion of Singapore's interpretation of CRC and issues that arise (Chapter 3), comprehensive discussion of general education law discussion has application across a range of jurisdictions based on the English court and law system, including Australia (Chapters 4) and discussion of broader international issues is very competent (Chapter 5), and discussion arising from a three-phase empirical data collection in Singapore. The interpretation of the empirical data is generally thoughtful with reference to the state of current law or potential issues, including issues not previously discussed such as contract and IP law, for educators in Singapore. Perhaps, overall, this section could have had more impact for the thesis, and more could have been made of the outcome that showed that in general policy implementations will be affected by the differing preconceptions of those involved.

Although a number of comments follow, given the contribution is so substantial it would be unfair to penalise the thesis due to a very small number of typographical errors noted, or comments on the overdetailing of methodological issues. The recommended grading is 4.1.

Originality

The thesis makes an original contribution through its comprehensive examination of education law matters and empirical data collection in one jurisdiction, Singapore. The thesis is well-designed and well-located in terms of international issues and trends in education law with focus on Singapore as a site of change.

As the candidate notes, no previous research was available to guide the research and this represents the first such contribution. The mix of methodologies used provide insights into the knowledge and perceptions of key players in education law in Singapore and provides an approach that could be replicated in other jurisdictions.

Critical insight

The candidate has demonstrated capacity to examine both the current state of and writing on education law from a range of jurisdictions and to analyse empirical data in a thoughtful and reflective manner against this background.

Capacity to carry out independent research

The candidate has demonstrated capacity to carry out independent research at the doctoral level.

Contribution to knowledge and contribution to field

The thesis makes a very valuable contribution to an area that is still relatively unresearched and undocumented in Australia. Although the focus is education law in schools in Singapore, the thesis provides a fine and comprehensive overview of specific issues for Singapore, general education law issues that are as relevant to Australia as to a number of other jurisdictions, and areas of international law. Up-to-date comparative review of education law status in Commonwealth and former Commonwealth countries a valuable addition also. The overview of the law is a major strength of the thesis.

Given the emphasis on the CRC for education law in Singapore, more discussion on the impact of being signatory to conventions for Singaporean legislation would have been worthwhile. Some discussion in terms of the compulsory years occurred, but a little more general law in the area would have been helpful. In Australia, while we are

signatory to such conventions, they are regarded as imported into or informing legislation but not binding.

Suitability for publication

The candidate has already made some publications and presentations from the thesis. However it is a fertile source for many further publications both within and outside Australia.

Other

Methodology and analysis

Unusual to have methodology as second chapter but the strategy works well for explaining the research and context of information gathering and argued the appropriateness of the use of the methodology for this study. However, the candidate has a tendency to overexplain or justify methodology, even for a doctoral level thesis where it is important to provide sufficient information regarding assumptions and methodology for others to understand and be able to replicate research. Some of the level of detail would be more appropriate in an appendix (meetings in office or café, p. 30; similarly, p. 208) and the essence of the methodological approach and theories retained in the body of the thesis, over discussion in the thesis itself slightly detracts from the thesis and overall sense of sophisticated thought and legal analysis developed through Chapters 1, 3, 4 and 5. By contrast the nature of the decisions made is necessary (consider the reduction of the number of statements discussed pp. 40-1 — the issue is not the number but what was discarded. Some examples would help here, many journal reviewers might expect/request these.). Justification for use of a tape recorder is not needed (pp. 30-1) as long as the participants agree. I would recommend reduction of most of this material to the key points for further publication. For this examiner, the legal and educational discussions were of more significance than philosophising on the methodological approaches.

Similarly, the discussion of the outcomes of the first and second phase of the data collection (pilot and interviews) could have occurred with less detail of all comments included in the texts. While the raw responses are interesting, these could have been included in appendices, with the major conceptual concerns synthesised into the main text, supported by a small number of quotes.

With respect to the Q methodology, technically, 47 participants would not be considered to yield a stable factor outcome if working with an equivalent number of statements, most such approaches have a rule of thumb of 10 times the number of participants to statements, and presumably Q methodology would be no different. However, the factors formed and interpretations are interesting and intuitive, and were supported by the follow-up interviews. It would be interested to replicate this outcome with a larger sample of teachers, say in Australia, and could be the focus of further research.

Editorial

The thesis has a very fluent writing style and easy flow of ideas with high levels of conceptual thinking but accessible to readers. It was generally a pleasure to read. The thesis presentation and literacy standard are generally very high but a small number of errors were noted during reading, listed below. The candidate may wish to attend to these before permanent binding or for future publication.

It is a standard approach to put acronym immediately after first use of full title, eg conventions (done on p. 56), rather than to assume reader will make the transition from full title to acronym independently. This has not been done in the early chapters.

Minor errors in reference list, missing initials of authors, page numbers for journal references, some inconsistency in ordering citations for authors by alphabetical or chronological order; occasional use of '&' between authors' names in text (should be 'and', eg p. 23, p. 49, p. 59, p. 165, p. 199) and conversely 'and' instead of '&' for citations in parentheses (eg p. 28,); referencing/citation format p. 176 in first line of paragraph starting 'as pointed out ...' and again p. 237, line 8, p. 239 line 9 (in same paragraph 'p.' in last line should be 'pp.'). Throughout there could be more consistent use of italics for case names when only part of the name is being used subsequent to its introduction; p. 190, first line, 'is' should be 'are'; p. 201, line 3, 'schools' ... 'it'; p. 27 after (2002, p. 3) ', ' should be deleted; p. 100 '.' before (Department ...) (line 2) should be deleted; p. 105 has Fischer et al been referred to previously? If not, should be cited in full. 'et al' should be 'et al.' (also p. 110, p. 165); p. 111 third bottom line, misspelling Australia; p. 118, line 2, too many verbs 'is have'; p. 132 typed line 11, last word 'heath' should be 'health'; p. 137, second last line word missing; p. 148, 3rd last line ', ' after (2001b) should be deleted; p. 229, final paragraph, change 'seem to suggest' to 'suggest'; p. 312, line 1, word missing after 'amongst'; p. 314 Stainton Rogers quotation should have page reference (note on p. 330, p. 331 this name is hyphenated (not elsewhere or in reference list)).

Interpretation of data

p. 210 paragraph 1, this could also be indicative of an increase in litigious matters in the last five years.

Notes:

- (i) Thesis could have been presented with double-sided printing to save some trees.
- (ii) In Queensland and many jurisdictions, the accepted form of 'judgment' as in 'legal judgment' occurs without the 'e'. Similarly the year is not italicised, not italicised if added to legislation by the author.

