
2005

Schools of Education, Theory Production, and Institutional Reform

Steve Loomis
Wheaton College

Jake Rodriguez
Claremont Graduate University

Rachel Tillman
Claremont Graduate University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/icctej>



Part of the [Christianity Commons](#), and the [Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Loomis, S., Rodriguez, J., & Tillman, R. (2005). Schools of Education, Theory Production, and Institutional Reform. *International Christian Community of Teacher Educators Journal*, 1(1). <https://doi.org/>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ George Fox University. It has been accepted for inclusion in International Christian Community of Teacher Educators Journal by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ George Fox University. For more information, please contact arolfe@georgefox.edu.

Schools of Education, Theory Production, and Institutional Reform

Abstract

The purpose of this brief study is to examine the constraints on theory production in schools of education, especially relative to Christian schools of education.

Volume 1, Number 1: Schools of Education, Theory Production, and Institutional Reform

Steve Loomis, Jake Rodriguez, and Rachel Tillman

Summary: The purpose of this brief study is to examine the constraints on theory production in schools of education, especially relative to Christian schools of education.

Introduction: The Problem of Under-Production of Theoretic Knowledge

The purpose of this brief study is to examine the constraints on theory production in schools of education, especially relative to Christian schools of education. The power of theory to regulate domains and institutions of human activity for better or for worse and for extended periods of time is undisputed. For example, the libertarian political philosopher Robert Nozick (1974) made this statement concerning his Harvard colleague, John Rawls: “A Theory of Justice [Rawls’ book] is a powerful, deep, subtle, wide-ranging, systematic work in political and moral philosophy which has not seen its like since the writings of John Stuart Mill, if then...Political philosophers now must either work within Rawls’ theory or explain why not” (p. 183). Similarly, Nobel economist Ronald Coase (1991) attributed to Adam Smith centuries of influence: “During the two centuries since the publication of *The Wealth of Nations* the main activity of economists, it seems to me, has been to fill the gaps in Adam Smith’s system, to correct his errors and to make his analysis vastly more exact” (p. 1). In the domains of political philosophy and economics today, we still live under the influence of Rawls’ (1971) and Smith’s (1776/1952) impressive, though flawed theoretic works.

While Rawls’ and Smith’s works were of course distinctly secular, over the last thirty years in the fields of philosophy, history, or economics Christian theorists such as Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (philosophers), George Marsden and Mark Noll (historians), and Peter Hill (economist) and others have made significant contributions that have helped to shape these fields. To our knowledge, however, a

Christian theorist in education has made no such specific impact in educational theory during the last thirty years, perhaps much longer. It is undoubtedly true that the institution of education in the U.S., especially its public schools, remains largely tethered to certain Deweyan theoretic, industrial era structures of education. (In a recent book, we argue that Deweyan progressivism morphed into essentialism driving the educational trading environment.) Why is this still the case? Why are Deweyan theoretic structures of education still dominant, particularly in light of growing social inequalities? Where are the Christian educational theorists and why haven’t they been offering a better, more just theoretic framework for education? What, if anything, can be done to correct the absence of theory production by Christian schools of education?

Theory is the over-arching model or paradigm by which human institutions function; theory is the rails upon which the practice of educational exchange occurs. Human actors consciously or unconsciously form beliefs and operate within governing theoretical frameworks developed by theorists in seminar rooms, libraries, dens, taverns, and coffee houses and that can control human social structures for decades and even centuries. Yet, it is an axiomatic law of life that they who control theories also tend to control the rules of an institution. In our view, theory—or the philosophical presupposition of theory—precedes institutions. Contra Dewey (1989), theories of human nature, for example, precedes and informs culture and society, not the other way round. This is not to dismiss the occurrences of social constructions and their obvious power in belief formation (for good or bad); rather, it is merely to suggest a sensible ordering between theory and culture (cf. 2 Cor. 10:5a). Following economic thought, institutions may be thought of as the rules that govern a domain of human activity (education, justice systems, banking, sport, etc.). For purposes of this essay, the term ‘institutions’ means the widest possible rendering of human activity—extended rules

which transcend locality and time and governed by an entity capable of central control such as a state or a firm. An 'organization' such as an individual university would represent a locality of social activity.

Before the analysis, let us be clear about what we are not claiming. While schools of education housed within Christian universities have produced little to no theoretic knowledge in the field of education, we are not saying that they have not conducted research; they have. However, little to none of this research agenda has been theoretic in nature; none has challenged the existing theoretic frameworks of education or schooling; none has integrated the rich institutional theories and philosophies of Jesus Christ and replaces these for the existing strongholds specifically and unequivocally constructed against God's theories of human equilibrium. Indeed, what research that has emerged concerning education originates from either outside of the field (e.g., theories put forward by economists or political scientists) or from the top thirty-five schools of education, which tend to emphasize the necessary, but insufficient, practical sort of research (Clifford and Guthrie, 1988).

Hence, our principle thesis is that Christian educational scholars have not been active stewards of educational theory. They have instead, on the whole, been passive receptors of mostly existing secular theory of education. This has led prominent Christian thinkers such as Dallas Willard (2002) to recognize the larger theoretical problem in education. Willard's comments are apposite: "Education as now understood—the actual social practice—cannot come to grips with the realities of the human self. It is not just a matter of 'separation of church and state' and all that has come to mean. Rather, education (the institution) has now adopted values, attitudes, and practices that make any rigorous understanding of the human self and life impossible" (p. 47). Likewise, we believe that this is a problem for several reasons of underperformance. We also believe that this is a serious problem of stewardship of the Christian mind. First, a lack of theoretic production tends to prevent the importation of valuable and rich streams of information that necessarily inform the practices of any field of study, including the field of teacher training or leadership development.

Second, it signals a passive acquiescence by Christian higher education to the secular view—a view with

roots in Deweyan (1929; 1934) and Rawlsian (1971) theoretic schemes of public institutions (educational and political)—that Christ-based information in theoretic research and practice has a relatively insignificant role to play in the greater institution of education (Audi, 2000). Third, it tends to diminish the effectiveness of teacher education departments and their graduates to help solve greater institutional problems such as social and economic inequalities. (We presuppose that one function of a school of education, as it used to be at secular universities, is to provide the theoretic bases for informing the practice of teacher education.) Fourth, it allows other forces within education to assert inadequate notions of consensus surrounding practice that then come to define the field. Finally, it suggests that schools of education are more interested in the financial gains made by focusing on the attainment or demand side of production (i.e., the mass production of practitioners) than they are with producing first-rate theoretic knowledge that challenges institutional orthodoxy in Christian, biblically centered and critically informed ways.

What is clear is that both Christian schools of education and departments of teacher education in the U.S. operate within the existing institutional rules, metrics, and standards imposed on them by externalities such as government, accrediting agencies, and political coalitions such as teachers unions and administrator associations. In this particular domain of Christian higher education, theory is almost exclusively provided to schools of education by secular authorities and mostly accepted without due diligence or challenge. The willing submission (as opposed to responding to coercion) to these externalities is both an effect of failing to produce independent or counter institutional theories as well as a passive acquiescence spoken of above. Yet an economic problem has surfaced with respect to the informational effects of these externalities (see Rodriguez, Loomis, and Weeres, forthcoming). In light of this economic problem, we will first examine the general forces affecting schools of education, secular and Christian. Afterwards, we will briefly discuss Christian schools of education and then suggest a modest agenda.

Schools of Education: A General Theory Concerning Constraints on Theory Production

Amongst their most important functions, schools of

education are (or ought to be) locations for the inter-and-trans-disciplinary production of theoretical and practical knowledge regarding the field of education in all (or at least many) of its forms and institutions. Teacher and leadership education is (or ought to be) one of the principal locations for the transfer of the knowledge generated within schools of education. Whereas leadership education is concerned with higher and lower education, teacher education is principally concerned with education transacted within lower form schools (pre-kindergarten through the 12th grade, state or private). Our present concern is whether or not schools of education on Christian university campuses are supplying a high-level agenda of theoretical frames, paradigms, or philosophies of education to teacher education and leadership programs. Specifically, are they working on questions such as these: 'Can there be in the 21st century a specifically Christian or Christian-influenced theory of reform of the institution of education in the U.S. and worldwide? If so, what are its theoretic elements, distinctives and legitimacy? If not, what are the theoretic or practical barriers and how might these be overcome?'

Schools of education, whether oriented toward research or practice, are part of the system of production within the institution of education. The expansion of the institution of education over the last sixty years has oriented the direction of production toward collective interests as evident in the vast numbers of people participating in schooling in the U.S. since 1946, and both research and practice moved together on this path. The tradeoff or division of information under the rules of this expansion transmits various costs to schools of education and their productive activities. Expressly, productive activities have become oriented mainly around the practical affairs of schooling, where information has been standardized and efficiently managed vis central control, leaving an impression that theoretic issues that define the framework of operations either have been largely resolved or are incapable of being resolved by schools of education. Standardization (or universal) information has replaced local (or particular) information (Meier, 1998). Put simply, expanding institutions divide or trade off the particular for the universal effectively extending the rules of educational trade across progressively greater boundaries and borders. This accounts for four main effects: (1) the inability to establish first principles; (2) the lowering of their status relative to other disciplines within the uni-

versity; (3) the leaving of injustices within the institution of education unresolved due to narrow, technical approaches to problems; and (4) the effect of making teachers and leaders in the public schools under-equipped to address injustices and core inequalities (information, resource allocation, management, etc.).

First, the prevalent idea today regarding schools of education is that the areas of theoretic research and practice are fundamentally different processes and exist in perpetual tension, even move in opposite directions. This idea stems from the belief that research operates upon the generalizing principles of science, and practice is akin to a craft or art and, therefore, highly individualistic. For example, since the training of scholars is different from the training of practitioners, the tendency is to view both as separate activities that counteract one another. This view strikes us as untenable for in reality research and practice within schools of education converge to track the evolving property rights structure in the institution. (For our purposes, a property right is the formal or informal access and authority to determine how, when, and under what conditions the education good may be produced. The property rights structure within the institution is evolving toward universal information and its central control.)

The convergence of research and practice is a function of the rules becoming more universal as the system of education expands. Expansion requires the turnover of the property rights structure (rules) such that old principles connected to the first set of property rights (say, the higher cost development of scholars) must give way to the principles associated with the new, more universal property rights (here, the lower cost development of practitioners). Both research and practice are subject to these information constraints imposed by expansion. The rules that promote the expansion become the standard of evaluation, or criterion of rationality, for good research and practice. All information that cannot be demonstrated to expand the system is seen as particular or private information. For example, most of the principles of good practice espoused by the 'managers of virtue' (Tyack and Hansot, 1982) would today be seen as representing particular, local interests and therefore not part of the public good. Their virtues would be seen as self-indulgent vices. Likewise research that once supported IQ scores as valid scientific measures of human intelligence has been (perhaps

rightly) dismissed as divisive and is today seen as invalid and separated from agenda. Further, and more important to our own agenda, specific Christ-based information in aims, morals, pedagogies, policies, and points of social equilibrium has been virtually eliminated from the public marketplace of educational ideas. What these examples represent is that schools of education cannot harbor first principles without incurring the costs of being seen as representing higher in cost, locally developed particular information. Legitimacy is a reward not so much for departing from the particular or theoretic as for voluntarily joining with the universal or collective, practitioner information.

Secondly, this identification explains a counterintuitive phenomenon: On the one hand, schools of education, generally speaking, endure low status within their host university (Labaree, 2004). On the other, they gain status through their alignment with the wider whole—the agencies of the collective—by contributing to the expansion of a system that is identified with the common good. Schools of education persist and even flourish despite their insularity from other academic disciplines. In other words, their low status and their high status are a function of their informational priorities. They gain and lose status by shutting out information that expresses competing views of the common good, that proposes alternative forms of production, and that advances the notion of the individual as the primary agent of production. Yet, it is too often the case (and regrettable reality) that the individual teacher-candidate—and by extension his or her future students—is unintentionally viewed as a simple, undemanding good; not the inherently complex good suggested by centuries of human thought and the reality described by Scripture. The avid affirmation of collective interests lead to a stable structure of exchange based upon an artificial consensus adjoining information. But caution must be raised here. As a concept ‘consensus’ requires unanimity of opinion or view concerning an area of information. When the managers of universal information presume that a consensus exists surrounding any but the most settled fields of knowledge, an error of logic is often made. In an area as elusive and complex as identifying the necessary and sufficient conditions for successful transactions between teacher and student, the conditions for effective schooling, and the development of human capital, these would seem not to warrant a claim of strict, formulaic consensus. Answers to what it is that makes a good teacher or

leader, an effective school, or the complex development of an individual’s talents and skills hold a near infinite set of variables which make it virtually impossible to wrap into a grid, matrix, or formula. Collective interests also tend to deplete variation and produce a path dependent pattern of conformity, i.e., an internalization of state and state-proxy norms of theory and practice. While schools of education have responded rationally to the greater institutional incentive structures laid before them, the evident tradeoff is their incapacity to produce independently the knowledge necessary to reform the greater institution of education.

The history behind the recent disengagement from theoretic pursuits is not in question. Formal momentum redounded during the 1980s for schools of education to divest themselves of their ‘false pretenses’ in competing with other academic disciplines and fields in the pursuit of knowledge-production. Many scholars, following the Holmes Group (1986) and Carnegie reports (1986), called for a new way for schools of education to progress into the new century; a way that moved them directly into the orbit of universal, standardized information. Two prominent scholars make this recommendation (Clifford and Guthrie, 1988):

We believe it is time for education schools to face their historic failures boldly, to divest themselves of false pretenses to being miniature models of social science institutes or liberal arts departments. To acknowledge their need to become professional schools and align themselves with their natural constituency of practicing educators is to contribute more intensely than they have at any time this century to the building of a profession of education in the United States (p. 366).

Thirdly, in spite of moving schools of education closer to the field of practice, this direction has failed to yield substantial results—the methods defined by this move have not led to ground breaking research results predicted by its adherents. Arthur Levine (2005) describes the problem this way:

Every few years, a study is published examining the quantity and quality of research in school leadership and the conclusions are invariably the same—the level and extent of scholarship is weak....The body of research in educational administration cannot answer questions as basic

as whether school leadership programs have any impact on student achievement in the schools that graduates of these programs lead. There is an absence of research on what value these programs add, what aspects of the curriculum or educational experience make a difference, and what elements are unnecessary or minimally useful in enhancing children's growth and educational attainment, K-12 teacher edevelopment and effectiveness, and overall K-12 school functioning. (pp. 43, 44).

It might be the case that this was (and is) exactly the wrong direction for schools of education to have moved because it fails to consider the individual (represented in the particular) as part and parcel to production. Moving schools of education toward the location of universal information (where the state and quasi-state agencies operate like a black hole relative to particular information) is actually a regression. To a certain extent, it dramatically reduces opportunities to generate the depth and breadth of information necessary to solve problems (e.g., social inequalities) and necessary to innovate. Rather, the present direction facilitates the expanding institution; it heightens the value of collectivized and standardized information in ways that create artificial scarcities; but it will always fail to account for the complexities of human beings and the highly complex process of educational exchange. Those who advocated the shift in focus to *techne* have failed to recognize that we can increase the number of characteristics production covers but only at the cost of departing from bounded technical methods. The technical model that lies as a basis of educational research today, emphasizes empirical method and positivist epistemology over broader philosophic inquiry, which over time incrementally reduces information into the spigot of production of complex goods. David Labaree (2004) illustrates the problem in the following terms:

It is not enough to be good at a particular mode of research and to be satisfied with a career of applying this approach in a series of studies. Where the terrain that needs mapping is this complex, researchers need to bring an equally complex variety of research methods to the task if they want to be able to view the subject in its many forms. Education starts to become understandable only when it is approached from multiple perspectives. This means that educational researchers need to have

a broad comprehension of the foundational questions about the nature of their inquiry, instead of relegating this skill to those in the philosophy of science. (p. 84)

Technical methods as represented in some parts of social science (game theory, high-stakes testing, quantitative demand models of leadership, business models such as the 'balanced scorecard', etc.) cannot unite individuality with universality while retaining individuality. The protection of individual liberty within expanding institutions such as education is increasingly difficult to achieve. At its core, the problem is informational. Managing the relative variances and chaos of human preferences, choices, and trade in response to expansion requires the submission and subsumption of the individual into the group; a lower cost methodology (some social science) that 'collectivizes' narrow forms of information which, at some uncertain tipping point, extends to political collectivism and a reduction in individual liberty. Hayek (1952) was prescient on this score. He deserves to be cited at some length:

The collectivist method...not satisfied with the partial knowledge of this process from the inside, which is all the individual can gain, bases its demands for conscious control on the assumption that it can comprehend this process as a whole and makes use of all knowledge in a systematically integrated form. It leads thus directly to political collectivism; though, logically, methodological collectivism [of the social sciences] and political collectivism are distinct, it is not difficult to see how the former leads to the latter and how, indeed, without methodological collectivism political collectivism would be deprived of its intellectual basis: without the pretension that conscious individual reason can grasp all the aims and all the knowledge of 'society' or 'humanity', the belief that these aims are best achieved by conscious central direction loses its foundation. Consistently pursued it must lead to a system in which all members of society become merely instruments of the single directing mind and in which all spontaneous social forces to which the growth of the mind is due are destroyed (pp. 161-162).

As agencies of the collective congregate preferences around some ideological relationship between growth and other values, it imposes a cost on local values—diverse ways of thinking about and doing education—by transforming them into private goods (becoming an

enemy of the social good). Institutional change thus renders public goods in a political sense, i.e., ties them strictly to the processes of politics and democratic control (Chubb and Moe, 1990). What were once seen as positive externalities of economic public goods (e.g., the education of the child within the family) now become seen as negative externalities, economically and politically, and as self-interested expressions for private goods. The group enforces this transformation. This move toward the collective is putting a price on alternative forms of production. Production is being pulled in the direction of the universal and expansion, stamping unlikes into likes, making all members of the teacher class interchangeable units of production (Lewis, 1976). Moreover, what has become clear is that schools of education can be seen to be tracking the processes of expansion. Any kind of research that does not support the rules is deemed a particular form of production, and rising costs are absorbed there.

Scholars have long recognized that if there is any hope of reducing inequality in education, it lies in a better understanding of the production process. Thus, over the past four decades there has been a substantial body of research seeking to improve the relationship between educational inputs and learning outcomes. Hundreds of studies have tried to identify a single overarching formula for the optimum production of the education good. But all such efforts have ended in failure. The reason for this failure stems from a basic belief that unites all orthodox production function studies of modern times: namely, the belief in the possibility of the optimum education as the product of a technical procedure. This is a method of solution by systematic analysis and precise measurement. It is a process that seeks to establish a system of causal or statistical laws based on what most often or invariably does occur. Studies that use this procedure are committed, on principle, to formulating the education good as a fixed-objective activity; they must specify a time frame, order priorities, and, so far as possible, establish with certainty the relationship among the factors of production. The aim is to construct a model that can yield accurate predictions about, or deliberately control, the behavior of educational events, one that can be tested by purely logical or mathematical means.

The technical model is attracted by a notion that a high degree of precision or certainty is attainable. The

clear assumption is that if the plan has been correctly established, then a conclusive pattern or solution must be discoverable. It is part of this same line of approach to assume that the preferences of human actors are known and unchanging, that there is universal acceptance of now secular educational goals, that we know the full range of choices and options before us, that there are no time constraints, that all the relevant information is fully available. Thus, the only unsolved problems are technical: how to select and organize the best means to attain the given educational ends.

However, there seems to exist very little justification for the exclusive use of this procedure or model. Its assumptions are not credible since they bear no resemblance to the real world of human beings and human institutions, all the uncertainty and change that we find in education reflected through human free agency. Insufficient resources, in fact, dominate the problems in the production of education: incomplete information about our options and the means to achieve them, and our need to choose, to sacrifice some ultimate values to secure others. What we are dealing with is a situation in which a multiplicity of ends must compete for a limited quantity of means. Numerous individuals are attempting to work out different educational goals and purposes, yet they are not in command of the same resources and opportunities for doing so. Thus, choices must be made, and losses accepted in pursuit of some preferred educational ends.

Bringing out the power of the technical model, nearly all schools of education for the last twenty-five years have incrementally re-oriented themselves around narrowly conceived, practitioner-based insider information, rule-sets, agenda, and language. As a result there is very little difference now between secular and Christian schools of education. Both secular and sacred schools of education have moved away from the humanities and toward the social sciences. The alteration of their own internal logic has shifted focus away from philosophic inquiry and toward the technical-epistemic method—a bounded, but highly rational mode of inquiry given a production premise of simple goods. But the production of rich theory and good teachers is not a simple good; these are among the most complex of human activities. Still, normative values were replaced by technical facts, reducing once-regarded certainties to mere probabilities; from first principles to second and third order ones.

In the last twenty-five years, schools of education within the university have incrementally adopted an orientation and developed a philosophic-view at odds with the complex production of the education good itself (local and individualized knowledge and skills development). In essence, they have receded from their host colleges and universities and moved voluntarily into a state of self-exile, handsomely compensated for in their strategic alignment with lower-cost universal information. The shift and self-isolation from the academic disciplines, and toward the state, has caused schools of education to become information poor, particularly in the development of theoretic knowledge.

Thus, all of these factors serve to negatively affect the full impact of teacher education and leadership programs. Both operate within the locus of universal information preventing these programs from consciously and strategically veering from present orthodoxy—this in spite of the fact that the present orthodox framework of educational production appears to be exacerbating social injustices by weakening (lowering the costs to) the complex development of educated human beings at all levels. New teachers emerging from such programs are ill prepared to reform or transform the institution of education due to the informal and formal constraints. And Christian teachers coming from these programs who desire to become agents of change in reality often become agents of conformity. They do so simply because they have not been provided an adequate theory of education from which to reform the institution of education and make its systems more responsible to individual constituents, particularly students and their parents.

Christian University Schools of Education: The Challenge

It is not for a lack of talent that no theories and no theorists are being produced by Christian university schools of education. Rather, what seems clear is that Christian schools of education will choose not to produce theorists or theories due in part to the higher costs associated in this activity, as well as the other factors and incentives discussed above. The expanding institution of education asserts a higher value and warrant on information which promotes stable, predictable exchanges and structures of education; information which supports a status quo, defined in

part by issues of institutional scale. Any production activity, such as the production of independent minded theorists and scholars, that does not line up with the virtues of practical certainty and (above all else) efficiency, tends to harbor unpredictable outcomes that might run counter to or somehow obstruct the predominant values of institutional expansion and its central control. Yet, without stellar and visionary leadership (Levine, 2005), Christian university schools of education are unlikely in the future to rock the educational boat; they would prefer instead to conduct their operations within the existing theoretical framework of education where gains are acquired such as tuition revenue through programmatic growth.

For at least the foreseeable future, Christian university schools of education will significantly under-produce an adequate level of differentiated theoretic knowledge to Christian or secular teacher education and leadership programs, thus forcing the development of practitioners to operate within the existing constraints (modes, methods, and missions) of strictly secular, but illiberal (and sometimes anti-Christian) theoretic frameworks. In addition, this lack of theoretic production from Christian education schools will also fail to answer the wide variety of social justice challenges facing twenty-first century education, including:

- steady rates of decline in student interest in high school since 1983
- persistence in school dropout rates for certain segments of the population in spite of interventions of policy and pedagogy
- gaps in student achievement which have not been resolved between black, white, and Hispanic students
- growing asymmetry between educational attainment and the actual development of commensurate knowledge and skills
- growing social and economic disparities between classes of people even during the 1990s, a decade of tremendous economic growth and expansion of educational opportunities in the U.S.

Clearly further study surrounding why it is that Christian schools of education will continue to under-produce first-rate theorists and theoretic knowledge is needed. We will merely suggest here that the production of theory requires what is now ill-regarded within the institution: an emphasis upon values and first prin-

ciples, the sort of values and principles which are often normatively grounded, transcendent, and informed by philosophic conceptions of human beings and their purposes. The production of educational attainment (credentialism) only requires a technical scheme wherein all questions of value become reducible to questions of fact; wherein problems and questions are viewed as resolvable through the implementation of the correct 'clinical' technique. However, the production of new theoretic knowledge in a complex, quantum, dynamic universe of education requires open inquiry of a vastly different nature than the ones currently operating within schools of education, Christian or secular. This epistemic problem of narrow method (and naturalistic paradigm) is connected to the information problem that, in turn, is an effect of a structural problem. For the expanding institution of education to continue to find opportunities to expand, there is (or will be) one clear winning direction: all factors of production, all information flow increasingly moves in alignment with the collectivizing forces of universal information (i.e., those defined by apparatuses of the state and quasi-state accrediting agencies).

Hence, it is completely understandable, even predictable, that Christian schools of education moved away from their host colleges and universities, where particular information is located, and toward the state, where the universal is located. The universal is where the financial returns are and gains made under conditions of scarcity. In other words, gains are made within an artificially closed system because incentives are lined up in that direction; the payoffs are located there. The traditionally elusive academic status for schools of education in a college or university is thought by some to be obtained by moving in closer alliance with universal information and its manager (i.e., the state). However, seeking status from the state in this manner operates as a 'camel effect' by draining room for particular information from a segment of a college or university. The void is incrementally filled with universal information. Just as a camel's nose is permitted into the tent, soon its body occupies all tent-space.

Conclusion: A Possible Agenda

Suppose one or more Christian schools of education were actually interested in rocking the educational boat through a high-level theoretical research agenda. Suppose there was a desire by some to become a Chris-

tian version of critical theorists and work to resolve educational inequalities and injustices in the rich traditions of Jesus Christ. Suppose a few of us wanted to have a similar impact that Plantinga, Noll, and Hill have had in the respective disciplines of philosophy, history, and economics. While these suppositions run counter to what is more likely to occur, we will nevertheless suggest one way to do this.

First, schools of education qua masters and doctoral programs can step back a bit from professional practice, meaning a step back from the information held by the state and quasi-state accrediting agencies, and allocate some of their best faculty members to theoretical research. As we have seen, this move is significantly higher in cost than producing field practitioners (important as this is). However, the long-term payoff would lie in the strategic production of Christ-influenced theories in education that would be difficult to ignore and that can formulate new and more just systems, organizations, and rules within education. Consequently, we urge that Christian schools of education spend some of that vast tuition income that they have been gaming, or secure monies from wealthy individuals and foundations, to endow chairs in theoretical research in education. Time is the most valuable commodity (or greatest enemy) of a theorist. Buying time and talent for high-level theoretical research is a long-term Christian investment in the reform of the institution of education.

Second, theoretical research will require a broader set of inter-and-trans-disciplinary lenses of analysis in order to maximize the depth and intake of information. A colleague of ours on the west coast reported a story of trying to convince his colleagues in a newly minted Ph.D. program that epistemic inquiry in the production of new research and scholars should be differentiated, diverse, and inter-disciplinary. Instead, a committee over-ruled him and ordered strict uniformity of research tools, in cohort fashion, for the examination of education. The members of this doctoral program believed (wrongly) that Ph.D. holders in educational studies should conform precisely to narrow technical methodologies. We believe that individualized Ph.D. programs—ones that offer rich and diverse lenses of inquiry (quantitative, qualitative, philosophic, historical, etc.)—tend to be higher in cost to cohort programs, which tend to lower costs through limiting and making same the research tools of emerg-

ing scholars; as we have shown, individuality and diversity run counter to present institutional orthodoxy. Unfortunately, this methodological indoctrination is the predominant view of many second and third-tier schools of education (and some first-tier ones), but must be avoided by Christian schools of education for the informational reasons already discussed.

Third, Christian schools of education can harvest new talent. The identification of bright young scholars is a foremost investment in the future of Christ's influence upon the institution of education. This talent can be developed directly either through new or restructured Ph.D. programs instituted by Christian schools of education or may be done by proxy by using secular schools of education. Concerning the later, a parallel program of identifying new talent exists in a philosophy program at the Talbot School of Theology (Biola University). There, a group of philosophers has strategically placed some 100 of their MA philosophy graduates into top-tier Ph.D. programs. They believe that this strategic investment in complex human capital will have an enormous payoff in shaping the direction of the field of philosophy for Christ in the next several generations. Likewise, Christian schools of education can identify talent for similar purposes on behalf of the institution of education.

Both the production of new scholars and facilitating the production of existing scholars often occurs through publishing. Therefore, schools of education can employ two strategies. First, Christian scholars of education should target their high-level theoretical studies and articles for the top-tier journals. Once these same scholars develop their high-level theories, it will be very difficult for even ideological editors and their journals to oppose publication. Second, Christian schools of education should develop new journals (like this one) and acquire existing journals for the purposes of developing a broad body of difficult to ignore research, theoretical and practical. One successful model in philosophy is the journal *Philosophia Christi*.

While both strategies for publishing the theoretical work of Christian scholars in education might help to reform the institution, over the coming decades costs associated with change and struggle are likely to be enormously high. However, the payoff is that they can have a profound impact over time just as it has in the fields of philosophy, history, and economics. The ques-

tion arises as to whether or not the lower costs associated with educational expansion and its orthodoxy are more appealing, profitable, and are to be preferred.

These are only several, perhaps obvious strategies to advance the production of theoretic knowledge and erect new theoretic superstructures. While many others surely exist, the point of this essay has been to declare, define, and delimit a significant problem for Christian schools and scholars of education. We now lay the challenge before our peers.

References

- Audi, R. *Religious Commitment and Secular Reason* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
- Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, May 1986).
- Chubb, J. and Moe, T. *Politics, Markets, and America's Schools* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1990).
- Clifford, G. and Guthrie, J. *Ed School* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988).
- Coase, R. *The Institutional Structure of Production: Lecture to the memory of Alfred Nobel*, December 9, 1991 (Ronald H. Coase Prize Lecture: nobelprize.org).
- Dewey, J. *Freedom and Culture* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 1989).
- Dewey, J. *A Common Faith* (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 1934).
- Dewey, J. *The Quest for Certainty* (New York: Minton, Balch & Co., 1929).
- Hayek, F. *The Counter-Revolution of Science: Studies on the Abuse of Reason* (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Press, 1952/1979), pp. 161-162.
- Holmes Group. *Tomorrow's Teachers: A Report of the Holmes Group* (East Lansing, Mich.: Holmes Group, 1986).
- Labaree, D. *The Trouble with Ed Schools* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004).
- Levine, A. "Educating School Leaders." *The Education School Project* (Columbia, NY: 2005).
- Lewis, C. S. "Membership". *The Weight of Glory* (New York: HarperCollins, 1976).
- Meier, D. "Can the Odds Be Changed" *Phi Delta Kappan* (Janu-

ary 1998).

Nozick, R. *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, 1974).

Rawls, J. *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard university Press, 1971).

Rodriguez, J. Loomis, S., and Weeres, J. *A Theory of Institutions* (forthcoming).

Smith, A. *An Inquiry Into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1776/1952).

Tyack, D. and Hansot, E. (1982). *Managers of Virtue: Public school leadership in America, 1820-1980*. (New York: Basic Books, 1982).

Willard, D. *Renovation of the Heart*. (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002).

Steve Loomis is a philosopher of education at Wheaton College, whose research is concerned with educational foundations including ontology, policy, and economies of information. Jake Rodriguez is an educational economist at the Claremont Graduate University, whose research is concerned with economies of information within institutions. Rachel Tillman is a graduate student in the School of Educational Studies at Claremont Graduate University.

