

2006

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Christina Belcher
Trinity Western University

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Recommended Citation

Belcher, C. (2006). Is the Heart of Education the Education of the Heart?. *International Christian Community of Teacher Educators Journal*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/>-

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Abstract

If a Christian Institution is to do more than expand the mind or 'head' of adherents (which is the reason given from a biblical worldview perspective for a Christian institute's existence), then how does education become an education of the heart, leading to a transforming world and life view? It is of note that even though Christian institutions are no strangers to the subject of worldview, sparse research has been done concerning worldview as it relates to long term educational impact. This paper is a case for the importance of looking at heart and worldview and a review of some of the literature that points the reader in that direction. Forthcoming research in progress will highlight ways in which one specific Christian institution does or does not live up to the metaphor that the heart of education is the education of the heart.

Is the Heart of Education the Education of the Heart?

Christina Belcher

Summary: If a Christian Institution is to do more than expand the mind or ‘head’ of adherents (which is the reason given from a biblical worldview perspective for a Christian institute’s existence), then how does education become an education of the heart, leading to a transforming world and life view? It is of note that even though Christian institutions are no strangers to the subject of worldview, sparse research has been done concerning worldview as it relates to long term educational impact. This paper is a case for the importance of looking at heart and worldview and a review of some of the literature that points the reader in that direction. Forthcoming research in progress will highlight ways in which one specific Christian institution does or does not live up to the metaphor that the heart of education is the education of the heart.

Prelude

This article previews research in progress rather than presenting a final outcome. It is desired that this paper will provoke readers to reflect on significant issues of Christian education with the hope of considering application to personal, professional and institutional practices. The content of this article will serve to stimulate thought on ways in which a Christian institution does or does not live up to the metaphor that the heart of education is the education of the heart. Results of the following research in progress will be forthcoming.

This research in progress is grounded in Ph.D. study currently underway at Monash University in Australia. The purpose of this project is to find out whether or not what an institution claims to do in its mission statement is actually reflected in the worldview/values/praxis of its adherents after formal education ends. Specifically, if a Christian Institution is to do more than educate the mind (which is the reason given from a biblical worldview perspective for a Christian institute’s existence), then how does education become an education of the heart, leading to a transforming

world and life view? To investigate this, this research will focus on the richly complex ways in which such an education might provide a frame of reference for the individuals in the course of their lives.

This narrative case study explores how one Christian educational institution that claims to foster and further a biblical world and life view, embodies a living tradition – hence exploring the ways in which the values and beliefs of the founding professors may be inflected in subsequent generations, and to note how subsequent generations have appropriated those values and beliefs and made them their own after their formal education has ended.

It is important to say that more needs to be said about how each of the following writers inform this investigation. While they all deal with worldview issues, differences and similarities between them need to be revealed in more detail. Not all aspects of this can or will be deeply probed within the purpose for this paper.

This research employs Jean Clandinin’s model of narrative inquiry (1995, 2000); which proposes that the deeper layers of knowing (heart knowing) become embedded in stories as personal narratives; the grand conversational emphasis of Bakhtin (in Felch 2001 and Ball et al., 2004) which advocates that it is within grand conversations in community that language reveals the deeper heart meaning of life; the educational emphasis and worldview philosophy expressed by T. S. Eliot (1967) who believed that religious roots are inherent to good educational practice; the contour proposed by Walsh & Middleton (1984) who have analyzed worldview through a rubric of philosophical questions and reality checks from a biblical perspective; the social critique of Postman (1995) and Sacks (2000) who believe that education should exist to create a public that is ‘particular’ to the education it receives; and the contextual perspective of David Naugle (2002,

2004), who advocates that people of God need to think kardiopically in a way that is heart centered, and subsequently becomes head and hands expressed as an embodied world and life view.

It is of note that even though Christian institutions are no strangers to the subject of worldview, sparse research has been done concerning worldview as it relates to long term educational impact. It is proposed that this research may lead to further questions of interest to Christian educators, concerning what impact a Christian educational institute has on adherents over time. This research may highlight ways in which one specific Christian institution does or does not live up to the metaphor that the heart of education is the education of the heart.

Entry into Discourse

Every research story has a beginning, and mine is no exception to the rule. In 1996, in what can be remembered as a personal Aha moment in my own educational journey, a nagging thought was born that led to a personal ongoing interest in the three strand cord of worldview, language narratives, and philosophy. What might be the implications of worldview, narratives and their language and philosophy within educational practice?

With educational background in both public and Christian educational institutions, at elementary, tertiary and university levels, I pondered (and continue to ponder) where the difference in such educational/institutional experiences would really reside, and what effect, if any, would any 'difference' make. This research in progress investigates the following questions:

- Was institutional 'difference' a progression from an intellectual assent about what it means to be educated, or was it more derivative of a heart-held belief about life and learning?
- Would an adherent in an educational institution become a particular kind of person, reflective of the world and life view of such an education?
- Could an educated person identify later life choices to being inherent within education received prior to graduation that then directed life in some way after graduation?
- Would adherents to various educational institutions graduate with differing worldview perspectives

regarding what it means to be human in life and vocation, or would they perhaps see schooling as little more than an intellectual journey?

- Would graduates merely conform to become like those they worked with vocationally, or would they become particular kinds of citizens stemming from their educational stories?

In 1995, American educators could read the provocation of Postman (1995) that schools exist because of shared narratives – overarching stories that have a past, present, and future reason for seeing and being in the world; a thought echoed consistently by Parker Palmer in his writing (1993, 1998, 2000).

In New Zealand, educators were investigating the discrepancy between critical theory and critical realism, (Giles, 2005); the significance of reflective practice as being formative to intentional worldview (Norsworthy, 2003); and the need for a thoroughly biblical exegesis on the perspective of faith and learning in educational delivery (Edlin, 2004).

During this same time frame (1995 – 2005), as a fellow educator, I was seeing a need for interest in the implications of worldview in literacy, spirituality and educational practice (Belcher, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005).

Since 1994, from the onset of postmodernism and the growth of interest and practice in critical theory (Erlandson, 2004; Edlin, 2004; Giles, 2005), there has been a burgeoning concern amongst Christian educators to more fully examine the extent in which worldview, narratives, and life stories represent what it means to be fully educated, rather than simply schooled. Neil Postman (1995) prodded this concern with his comment that education does not exist to serve a public, but rather to create one – the question being, what kind of a public does education desire to create? Postman loved metaphors, and he inspired the idea that one should be steeped in a reason for education rather than merely swished.

Prior to Postman, T. S. Eliot (1967), in his outstanding work *Christianity and Culture*, presented the Christian dilemma well when he reminded readers that according to the view of the observer, culture would always be a reflection of religion, and religion would always be inherent in culture within the whole of society. Eliot expands in the same text to say:

In the field of education it is obvious that the conformity to Christian belief and the possession of Christian knowledge, can no longer be taken for granted...in any future society that I can conceive, the educational system will be formed according to Christian presuppositions of what education – as distinct from mere instruction – is for...(p. 29).

In noting this, Eliot does more than just make a link between religion and culture.

He sees religion within culture as a two sided coin. He sees education not only as being an individual enterprise, but also a communal one. The whole of society is affected by this world-in-life-view, or worldview product. Eliot recognized that the cultural faith perspectives from which one views the purpose and cultural role of an institution are important.

An internet search suggests that the word worldview is used increasingly, but there are not adequate numbers of books exploring this topic. This prods a consideration of research as it would apply to a very needy area. While the word worldview may be a buzzword currently, appearing within the context of theology, religion, travel, education, philosophy, and popular culture, is the true meaning of worldview understood? What research had been done on this topic?

Moving From the Known to the Unknown...

Research on Christian institutions of education specifically, and other educational institutions in general, has tended to fall under four main themes.

The first theme is that of institutional resilience. This theme considers how an institution remains faithful to the original vision or creed. Research on this theme deals with the matter of intent.

The second theme is that of educational organization. This theme considers how an educational institution works at its best and how it brands itself to the public. This research deals with matters of public exposure; marketing, what Habermas (1971) and Sergiovanni (2000) refer to as the system world of institutional life, and praxis.

The third theme is that of educational practice. This theme deals with the technique of teaching. In the

case of the research institution for this study, it would also include the following parameter – in a manner faithful to or unfaithful to its espoused worldview and vision. This would include consideration of the topics of curricular design, curricular delivery, class management, reflective practice, and creating community all as aspects of organizing the teaching and learning tasks. This theme frames matters of daily narrative and relational interaction.

Finally, there is the theme of worldview awareness. This area is the most underdeveloped of them all in the sense of research. This deals with the theme of worldview as this would direct or influence world and life views, belief and hope. Research on the themes of intent, narratives, worldview and hope are most significant to this current research project. A view of past research will accentuate the significance of this study as being both relevant and timely to educational awareness in a postmodern educational context.

Reviewing The Above Themes In Prior Research

In examining the category of institutional resilience, Benne (2001), building from the work of Marsden (1997) on authentic Christian scholarship, conducted a case study of six schools from six religious traditions. Benne examined how these institutions kept their vision publicly relevant, and explored the need for Christian institutions to be reflective and engaging in academic life. Adrian (2003), in his research on how colleges and universities maintained faith commitments, found there was a tension between faith and culture historically. He noted the current decline in faith commitment across an historical timeline. Justins (2002) concluded that prevailing practices in Christian schools gave faithful expression to foundational values, but that they struggled to actually engage consistently with those values. The Catholic scholar Hellwig (1997) talks about school identity in a way that extends to consideration of the architectural decisions, sense of place, and design within the institution itself. De Jong (1990) argues that university/colleges must seek to foster growth of students as whole persons, focusing on their spiritual/moral as well as intellectual development in the market of higher education, thus stating that a Christian presence was an agenda for the marketplace. Sandin (1982) found that the task of the Christian college was to be distinguished in cognitive and affective goals, in order to produce a distinctive

Christian scholar who would bring new religious questions into the fabric of education. Poe (2004) found that religion is already in the academy (not only in private academies stated to be Christian), in all academic disciplines. Poe reaffirms Edlin's work (1999) that there is no neutrality within educational institutions and educational delivery.

Although schooling is a relational enterprise, the above literature suggests that the system world of schooling has been more robustly researched than the relational life world. The notion of people as relational beings being important to Christian education has been noted by Fowler in *Pointing the Way* (Ireland, Dickens and Edlin, 2004). In addition, Hellwig, who considers a sense of place or design that includes worship, and De Jong raise the relational aspect of the human embodiment of faith in an institution as part of their respective studies.

In the category of educational organization, Rose (1988) examined the procedures involved in Christian schooling, the jobs students acquired after graduation depending on the type of school curriculum used, and the effectiveness of the above in furthering educational practice and pedagogy in curricular design. Van Brummelen (1989) did research that explored the pro or anti argument for Christian education prevalent in the culture and worldview of the mid 1980 – 2000 era. Smithwick (2000) did an institutional study of how faith waxes or wanes theologically in educational institutions, calling for a need for better 'worldview' training of those who instruct the young. The above research stresses procedure and methodology; the doings of schooling that need to be examined in order to align with subsequent actual end results in lifestyle and practice of educational adherents.

In the category of educational practice, research looked at different aspects of teaching and learning in a more relational tone. Norsworthy (2003) emphasized the need for authentic reflection on educational practice in order to develop transformative practice both for and in teachers in training; Anderson (1998) examined how faith inspired the work of twenty-two Christian academics; Palmer (1998, 2000, 2004) stressed the need for being relational in educational practice in ways that are undivided, authentic and heart and soul examining; Noddings (2003) advised a theory of care as being part of good educational practice, while Goodlad

(2002) challenged the reader to develop new models for teacher education. All of these researchers show a move from 'methodology' to 'intentional practice', involving reflective practice and mentoring, in their research studies.

The fourth category is that of worldview awareness. Anderson (1994) examined the emergence of religious identity in college women who seek to learn in a non-Christian religious institutional culture; Postman (1995) scrutinized the reasons for education, and the need for a metanarrative, or god, to guide it; Daniels (2000) sees the need to make spiritual assumptions explicit in management and leadership education; Tatto and Papanastasiou (2003) examined the influence of theory and strategies in teacher education; while Eliot (1967) and Naugle (2002, 2004) stated the need for a Christian ethic to return to educational landscapes in order to equip a whole person. This group of researchers brings us into the large expanse of narrative and metanarrative foundations and intents in education that merge to become activated philosophies or worldviews for schooling.

The literature review completed on Christian institutions in context of resilience, narrative, and practice, reveals a gap in the scope of the study of worldview, which I feel my research in process can fill. In essence, it ponders Naugle's (2004) premise of kardioptic thinking; whether the heart of education is really the education of the heart.

Research Methodology

This research is qualitative and is undergirded by the following researchers. Firstly, Locke, Spirduso and Silverman (2000) frame the soul of this type of research when they stated

Qualitative researchers assume that there are aspects of reality that can not be quantified. More particularly, they believe that it is both possible and important to discover and understand how people make sense of what happens in their lives. That includes asking research questions about the meanings people assign to particular experiences, as well as discovering the processes through which they achieve their intentions in particular contexts. It is also assumed that all persons construct their individual accounts of each event in which they are

participants. Those subjective constructions are accepted as the realities of the social world (p. 97).

In the case of exploring the narratives of educational experience beyond the intellectual acquirement, this contour fits the task well indeed.

Second, other relational perspectives are also echoed in the research by Clandinin (2000), who stated that

...narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. It is a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in this same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling the stories of the experiences that make up people's lives, both individual and social. Simply stated...narrative inquiry is stories lived and told (p. 20).

Research in progress will explore the above contours of qualitative research: reality that cannot be quantified and stories lived and stories told within the parameters of this particular study.

Current Implications And Further Concerns

This paper is crucial. Firstly, it serves as a call for further research concerning the education of the heart and provides a strong appeal for answers to the question is the heart of education the education of the heart? Secondly, it serves as a preview for my current research.

This research in progress seeks to understand how what I will term as spiritual and kardioptic worldview literacy – the blending of worldview, narratives, language, hermeneutical foundations and philosophy – is transferred over time within one specific Christian educational institution. This project explores how one Christian educational institution that claims to foster and further a biblical world and life view, embodies a living tradition – hence exploring the ways in which the values and beliefs of the founding professors may be inflected in subsequent generations, and to note how subsequent generations have appropriated those values and beliefs and made them their own after their formal education has ended.

This project involves a risk and a wild hope. Firstly, there is the risk that acknowledges the fact that worldview is hard to pin wriggling to the wall. Albert Greene states: Remember that worldviews are deeply ingrained and are usually held below the level of consciousness. They shape our lives far more fully than we realise. But when we lift them to the level of consciousness and work them out in a system of thought, we produce a philosophy (1998, p.73). Greene's comment is very significant to the study of Christian and other institutional communities, because it brings to attention the fact that worldviews are embedded in philosophy and exposed in conscious language. World and life views, or worldviews, are narratively embodied, and bodily expressed! Hence, if one desires to know how adherents are affected within an institution, one must listen to their stories, not study their methods.

Secondly, the project involves a healthy dose of wild hope in the face of the fact that many readers may not be all that interested in the need to explore the philosophical intent and narrative framework in which worldview is clothed as this relates to ongoing educational practice or mis-educational practice. Often, the Postman (1995) quip 'a problem that is familiar is more comfortable than a solution that is not' can be a real deterrent to exploring an area in which little prior research has been done.

However, I take courage in the fact that narratives are becoming significant in indicating what it means to be 'real' in culture. N. T. Wright (1996) reminds us that Jesus took stories seriously; that they were not just kid's stuff, but the real fabric of daily life in the making. According to Wright, stories create worlds. Tell the story differently and you change the world. For that reason alone, educators should be more interested in the narratives that are reflective of educational experiences.

Blamires informs us that "the battle for morality and reason is often lost or won when a new verbal usage is accepted or rejected" (1999, p.33). We are a people narratively created, and the education of the heart is therefore embedded in story. Educational institutions are not exempt from either the power of story or the battle for reason and morality. Such stories that create worlds may also intentionally spawn worldviews. No education is neutral.

This distinction of educating for a particular overarching metanarrative or purpose, similar to the contour of Freire's view of teachers as revolutionaries, is currently very significant in a postmodern world where difference is valued, stories are many, and clarity on the significance of either is scant. If education exists to create a public, (Postman, 1995), and differences in public occur, could it be due to education promoting a particular worldview narrative?

Much more could be said, but the problems and challenges of postmodern thought on literacy, narrative story and faith constructs would involve an entire paper worthy on its own merit. For this article, I want to truncate the topic, and press on with the concern of what my research may add and some final thoughts on why I feel it is important for such a time as this.

Bringing wonder, truth, justice and reconciliation to education

As a Christian who is also an educator, I personally believe that the grand conversation of the biblical narrative from Genesis to Revelation consists of a meta-narrative, or grand overarching story, that constantly urges readers to become individually and communally what Sacks (2000) would term a particular people; a community living in the light of wonder, truth, justice and reconciliation.

From this point, additional questions can be raised:

Are Christian institutions in particular, and educational institutions generally, sending out adherents who cannot live in the world faith-fully – in ways that relate to the worldview from which they were educated?

Are educators who claim to be Christian educating students to be harbingers of hope in the fullness of faith, or are they furthering a different world and life view than that of a biblical metanarrative?

Are private Christian educational institutions beneficial to our current society in any way?

I suggest that it is very important to ponder what kind of a worldview perspective towards seeing and being in the world an institution nurtures. Is this of greater impact on an adherent than training for a specific job or to qualify for a specific grade point average? What is the impact of an institutional worldview narrative individually and communally in promoting a world-

view that may be transformative after the educational experience ends?

David Naugle states:

A worldview, then, constitutes the symbolic universe that has profound implications on a variety of significant human practices. It digs the channels in which the waters of reason flow. It establishes the hermeneutic framework by which texts are interpreted. It is that mental medium through which the world is known. Human life in its variegated aspects, so it seems, proceeds 'kardiopically' – out of a vision of an embodied heart living in the world. (Naugle, 2004, p. 27)

If Naugle is right, then the heart of education is really the education of the heart. Further research will endeavor to discover why this may occur, how it may or may not occur, and what benefits or losses may be forthcoming if education is not of the heart, but of the intellect alone.

I believe that this study will have much to offer a) in seeing education as being delivered or practiced 'religiously' in institutional life throughout postmodern culture, b) in viewing the effects of philosophical worldview contours on educational experience and life practice, and c) on seeing how education serves to create a public as well as to serve one.

Although my research is still in the early stages, participants are speaking about worldview as being highly valued and significant in the course of educational practice and in life choices after formal education has ended. I believe the results of this research will have much to offer educators who want to become accountable in the stories they embody.

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Christina Belcher is an assistant professor of education at Trinity Western University and a doctoral student of Monash University Peninsula Campus, Frankston, Australia