

Ward, Ted W. 2012. Facilitating Human Development. *Common Ground Journal* v10 n1 (Fall): 12-14. ISSN: 15479129. URL: www.commongroundjournal.org.

Author's Note

Since childhood, my life has been concerned with learning as a developmental process. Starting as a church musician, adding instrumental music teaching in secondary school, preparing for overseas missions, then to college teaching, and winding up deeply committed to educational research and planning, my career has focused on educational development, worldwide. As a Christian, my concern is for leadership education. As I see it, from Sunday School through theological education, the purpose of Christian education is to aid the development of the people of God as leaders—for the church, for the family, for business, industry and society.

Abstract

The article focuses on the values and behavior of Jesus as basic to the education of leaders. The full humanity of Jesus necessitates inclusion of his behavior, attitudes, interpersonal skills, and communication style in pastoral education. *Originally prepared by Ted Ward for the Michigan Teachers Christian Fellowship, 1982.*

One of the reasons why we have difficulty in applying research on teaching to the process of teaching itself is that teaching is not altogether a rational process—if indeed it is primarily a rational process. I think that teaching is a common-knowledge process in which all human beings participate both as recipients, obviously, but more particularly as doers. There's hardly a day that goes by that someone isn't teaching someone else something. So then the professionalization of teaching involves the bringing of a sort of level of rationality—and disciplined rationality—over what is actually a very subjective process. In many respects the function of "pastor" is similar. There is in the human being that capacity to respond to another human being. It is a common feeling (I won't say common knowledge) among human beings. We are created as people who can feel; who can care; who can minister—never mind knowledge. And when we take and professionalize that caring function we do the same thing we do in teacher education, which tends sometimes to backfire. The rationality tends not to mix too well and not to coat with any degree of adherence that subjective thing which is really more basic. I really believe that most teachers are relatively unaffected by their years of teacher education. They probably teach in about the same way they would have without the teacher education experience.

They may have a greater sense of anxiety which may in some cases cause them to not do or do that which they otherwise would not have so they have a cognitive level which is able to produce a sense of dissonance between what they would emotionally do and what they would rationally do. I believe the same thing about pastors: Theological education can set up that knowledge base which becomes a dissonance. But I don't believe the knowledge-base ever becomes a transcendent base. Nor do I believe that it should. This is not an appeal to irrationality. It is simply an observation that in the nature of humankind is that capacity to respond in ministry and especially in the new nature. That is, in the redeemed person there is that capacity to respond in ministry. Therefore, it is not altogether a rational thing when we talk about the "competency" of a pastor. And we make a terrible mistake when we bring it all down to things that can be measured school-like. The isolated bits of knowledge don't help the basic personhood of the teacher or the pastor nearly as much as they are supposed to.

Much of the knowledge basic to teaching is not exclusive to the professional educator. Indeed, an easily overlooked characteristic of the field of education is its commitment to make a profession of something that virtually every human being can do already—to teach. Whether the teaching acts of ordinary life are approached in a self-conscious or casual manner, all persons learn something of what to do and what not to do to help others learn. That laypersons hold the teacher in no great awe, that the public in general feels qualified to critique the effectiveness of schools and teachers, that the education of teachers is not recognized with the same dignity afforded to medical education, law schools, and even engineering colleges—all these can be traced, at least in part, to the common awareness that, in more or less significant ways, everybody teaches.

As far as the public is concerned, no clear case has been made for the distinction between being able to teach and being able to teach well. It seems unlikely that even a correlation between certain experiences and effective teaching has yet been shown in any way that convinces the public.

All prospective teachers are members of this public. Far from being in *tabula rasa* condition, those who enter teacher education bring a substantial body of knowledge about teaching and teachers. Into this complex matrix of cultural stereotypes (Thelen, 1969) and idiosyncratic teaching experiences, the curriculum of teacher education makes its inroads. What is to be taught to the prospective teacher is dissonant or consonant with what is already known about teachers and teaching. The meanings that the emerging professional develops from all of this are extensive reflections of a vast social lore. The “success” or “failure” of teacher education to some extent is a reflection of the relative persistence of competing sources of knowledge.

To understand how valid knowledge about teaching finds its way into the teacher’s practice, we must know about the previous knowledge that forms the more or less coherent whole of the teacher’s habits of mind. What are the likely dissonances? What are the needed refinements of partial knowledge? What “common knowledge” is consonant with scientific knowledge?

The research problem is to identify and “track” the particular knowledge that teachers have and use as they set appropriate activities for diverse students in diverse curricular areas in diverse learning contexts. To understand what constitutes such knowledge at the outset of teacher education is the basic task. Beyond this, to identify the consonances and dissonances within the matrix of knowledge in the face of the knowledge conveyed through professional education is a research task of great importance.

Particular research questions include the following:

1. What common assumptions about the teacher’s roles and behaviors are dominant in the “untrained” habits of mind of the prospective teacher?
2. What particular knowledge does the prospective teacher call out from his/her experiential repertoire to make choices about appropriate teaching activities?
3. How does the matrix of knowledge (habits of mind) compare with the knowledge base presupposed and intended by the teacher educator?

Education too easily glorifies the one who learns. Paul’s analogy of the treasure that is contained in pots of earthenware showing that “such transcendent power does not come from us, but is God’s alone” (2 Cor. 4:7 NEB) is a reminder that we gain no glory from being vessels of his truth.

Education concerns are arising from the awareness that there are unmet needs in the emerging churches in the majority world.

When the curriculum of theological education, for example, is seen as a sacred relic—whether because it came from heaven on a golden cord, or because it is the time-honored perfected outcome of the scholarly winnowing, a searching and sorting that was a task for theologians in some earlier era of mental endowment—too often it led to intellectual rigidity and institutional ossification.

In my own academic field, curriculum and instruction, we make a distinction between these two areas of concern. There are *curricular* matters and *instructional* matters. They are inter-related, for sure, but the curricular concerns always come first. “What should be taught why?” Here is the key question. I prefer to ask it with no conjunction or even a comma ahead of why.

What-should-be-taught-why? The emphasis should be on the what-why connection. Herein lies the heart of professional education value-based decisions that must be asked over and over again if any educational program is to adequately relate truth to the social consciousness of learners.

More fully expressed, this question connects to instructional concerns, most specifically in the last phrase: “What should be taught why, to whom, and under what conditions?” One ought never to select particular methodologies until this foundational question of the appropriate learning conditions is carefully considered. Such matters as the appropriate amount of structure, the degree of imposition of pre-determined goals, the use of coercion or threat, the sort of support needed, the choice between convergence or divergence as purpose are too important to be left to chance or to the built-in-values of the “canned curriculum” from a publisher.