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THE INTEGRATION
OF FAITH AND LEARNING
IN A TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM:
A PILOT PROGRAM AT SPICER MEMORIAL COLLEGE

by

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Introduction

" I am doing Teacher Education because, in order to teach in a school (elementary or secondary), I must satisfactorily complete a teacher certification program." This is the typical response of most teacher education students. Though the student may have come to an institution with such a matter of fact and down to earth philosophy, it is the religious duty of the Christian institution and therefore its faculty to justify the kind of teacher education program they are offering.

Doyle and Ponder (1977-1978) through their research have shown that teachers tend to teach the way they were taught, and it is difficult for them to change their habitual mode of teaching unless they see a very good reason to do so. A Christian teacher has the reason. In a Christian institution integration of faith and learning is not an option but the very purpose of its existence. Arthur Holmes (1993) has rightly written that we are not integrating, but in reality reintegrating faith and learning, because, that is how it was during the Bible times. The religious norms guided the complete life-style of the society then. The social was not separate from the religious.

This article explores the relationships among the mission statements of the college and the school of education, the school climate, the faculty, and the school curriculum. It also portrays the teacher education program at Spicer Memorial College in the form of a case study to illustrate an attempt at integration of faith and learning in some of the courses of study in practice.

If we want teachers to integrate faith and learning in our schools, then it is imperative that the student teachers be taught how to do it in the teacher education program.

The Mission

What is the purpose for the establishment of a Christian educational institution? If it is to impart knowledge and award degrees how then would it be different from any other educational institution? Why then should a student pay more to get what he could get at a subsidized rate in a government college?

There is something that a Christian college can offer that no other college does. The

redemption of souls is not on secular colleges' list of goals. In fact Mrs. E. G. White (1952) states that the work of education and redemption is one and the same. It is

"To restore in man the image of his Maker and to bring him back to the perfection in which he was created, to promote the development of body, mind, and soul, that the divine purpose in His creation might be realized-this was to be the work of redemption. This is the object of education, the great object of life" (White, 1952,pp 15,16).

This then is the primary goal of a Christian institution. Therefore it is specifically desirable if not necessary to take a careful look at the mission statements of the college and that of its teacher education program.

Having established in the previous paragraph the framework for all-pervading goal for the college -- improvement of the soul, or making of a total and complete person, it is essential to provide guidelines to establish the mission statement for the teacher education program. Such a statement should have its roots in the philosophy that "Every human being created in the image of God has power akin to that of the creator individuality power to think and to do" (White, 1952, p.). In addition the statement should recognize that "Higher than the highest human thought can reach is God's ideal for His children. Godliness- Godlikeness- is the goal to be reached" (White, 1952, p18). This being our understanding, every student that comes to the class will be a priceless possession entrusted by God into our care to fashion according to the similitude of His calling.

Myrna Colon puts it this way:

The challenge of Christian education is to cooperate with God in presenting his Son as the integrating element through which man can be redeemed and restored. Thus it is imperative that every aspect of Christian education - the teacher, the subject, and the experience beyond the classroom, reflect Christ (1994).

The College Climate

For the success of any institutional program the atmosphere of the place is very important. A Christian institution must have a Christian environment. Mrs. E. G. White(1923,pp.473) says "A Christian influence should pervade our schools... ." Christian college is not any college. Valuegenesis report (1993) of the research on Christian educational institution points out that at Adventist schools the environment is warm and accepting, the students feel accountable for their behavior, and the teachers are Christian role models.

In the Teacher Education program like any other Christian school "The teacher must seek to

foster a class environment of respect and trust, both among students and between teachers and students" (Rasi,1989,p14). It is also important that there be an environment of respect and trust among teachers. The students are constantly watching the behavior of their teachers. And in most cases they emulate the teachers.

The Teacher

It is said that the teacher effects destiny. It is beyond our imagination to gauge the depth and breadth of teachers' influence. Teachers leave individual as well as collective effect on their students. If the teachers are Christian, their Christian influence will be very powerful (Akers, 1993,94).

In a Christian school teachers are to be professionals as well as leaders in religious training. Akers (1993,94, p6) puts it very succinctly "Whatever the subject matter, Christian teachers are pastors first and foremost. Their sanctuary is the classroom, their pulpit is the teaching lectern, their parishioners are students."

Staff development is one more avenue of professional growth among teachers. Rice (1993, 1994, pp.17) quotes Valuegenesis findings to establish that Adventist schools take great interest in staff development-"The school takes an aggressive posture toward faculty growth, providing encouragement for teachers to obtain advanced degrees, credentials, and continuing education".

It is only the caring Christian teacher who takes time to prepare himself to play several roles in the life of a student. Akers (1989) gives an adequate job description of such a teacher. He calls him a professional, parent partner, pastor partner, prophet, and priest.

The christian teacher must be a converted person. God lives in and through him. His life is a sermon in itself. He believes that "The Lord will accept as teachers only those who will be gospel teachers" (White, 1923, p.527). Salvation of his students is uppermost in his mind. If such is the case, a Christian teacher educator will require his pupils to have dedication, knowledge and skills, and love for God and man before he recommends a student teacher for certification.

A survey I conducted at Spicer Memorial College revealed that students expected a Christian teacher to be fair and accountable, available when needed the most, understanding, flexible without being lax, and firm without being rude. In short Christian teacher has to live a life of a Christian.

It is however, difficult for a teacher, Christian or a non-Christian, to change instantly his/her habitual mode of teaching.

TEACHER CHANGE

In 510 B.C., the famous Greek philosopher Heraclitus said, "There is nothing permanent except change." Study of change in education has a short history. Rogers (1962) reviewed 506 studies of innovations involving anthropology, rural sociology, medical sociology, and education, and proposed a model to explain why individuals do or not adopt innovations. As an extension of this study, Rogers and Shoemaker (1971) analyzed 1,500 studies. As a result, a large body of literature developed around the phenomenon of initial resistance to change.

Another body of research was the use of a consultant as a change agent. The consultant was an expert in his field and could share knowledge and experience with the educators. This aspect was studied by, for example, Greiner (1969) and Havelock (1969, 1973).

The question that comes to our mind is "Why do we want teachers to change?" The general belief is that teacher change will bring about increase in student achievement. However, external pressures such as decisions by legislatures, school boards, superintendents, or even principals do not necessarily cause change in a teacher. "Teachers change only if they are convinced that the new way is good for them--if it will lead to greater student learning" (Berlin & Jensen, 1989).

There are many factors to antecedents that change an individual teacher's practice through staff development, and these are:

- (a) teachers' pretraining psychological states, (b) characteristics of teachers' immediate task environment--the classroom, and (c) various dimensions of the interactive contexts of schools. (Smylie, 1988, p.6)

Some believe that teachers' ability to influence student learning outcome is contingent on their personal teaching efficacy (Ashton & Webb, 1986). Teachers' ability to affect student learning have been associated to their choice of classroom management and instructional strategies (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Dembo & Gibson, 1985). This indicates that teachers adopt and implement innovative classroom strategies if they have confidence in their own ability.

Another factor that influences teacher's personal teaching efficacy is their belief in their own technical competence (Bandura, 1977).

SOME STUDIES ON TEACHER CHANGE

CBAM Studies

Gene Hall (1980) proposed three key parameters of the change process research: (a) Implementation is a phase of the change process, (b) Innovations are usually adapted during implementation, and (c) attention must be given to individual users and nonusers of an innovation.

Fullan and Pomfret (1975) discussed implementation in detail. They said implementation is the phase of the change process that occurs after the program is introduced into the classroom.

The term innovation refers to the new program or process being implemented or to key changes being made in an existing program. Innovations are adapted by different users to fit different contexts. Perhaps the best known reference on adaptation of innovation is the Rand change agent study (Berman & McLaughlin, 1975) in which the authors proposed the concept of "mutual adaptation." The innovation is adapted to fit the local context and the individual teachers rather than being implemented exactly as prescribed by its developers.

Users, to some extent, adapt to the requirements of the innovation. Thus, both the innovation and the users adapt to more closely approximate the requirements of the other. The implication of this concept is that evaluators cannot assume that the implementation of the innovation is taking place as proposed by the developers of the innovation, or that the innovation is implemented in the same way in each site.

Individuals involved in change were a key focus of research by Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) team (Hall, Wallace & Dossett, 1973). Key assumptions underlying CBAM are: (a) Change is a process, not an event; (b) change is made by individuals; (c) change is a highly personal experience; (d) change involves developmental growth in feelings as well as skills with respect to an innovation; (e) change is best understood in operational terms; and (f) the focus of facilitation should be on individuals, and the context (Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin, & Hall, 1987).

The CBAM views the teacher as a major facilitator of change toward school improvement. Hence the teacher becomes the source of innovation, impetus for innovation, and implementation facilitator (Hall & Guzman 1984). From the CBAM perspective each individual will adopt the innovation in their own way. Therefore, each individual is considered to be either a user or a nonuser. CBAM experience suggests that, in general, administrators and other decision-makers are not reliable sources of information as to what actual classroom practice is for each individual.

Therefore, evaluators should be encouraged to assess directly whether each individual is a user or nonuser.

In the CBAM model, change facilitators are provided with three sets of diagnostic data: Stages of Concern, Levels of Use, and Innovation Configurations. The change facilitator then provides interventions--actions that affect and facilitate teachers' use of new programs or practices (Hall & Hord, 1987).

DESSI Studies

The findings from the study of Dissemination Efforts Supporting School Improvement (DESSI) looked at schools and improvement-oriented change from a somewhat different perspective and in a somewhat different light than previous studies that yielded discouraging results (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; and Goodlad, 1984). Pointing out its differences with the Commission survey, Goodlad study and Rand study, Loucks (1983) wrote:

First, unlike the Commissions's survey and Goodlad study, we were looking at schools that had made a commitment to improvement and had done so by implementing a new curriculum or instructional practice. Second, unlike the well-known Rand Change Agent Studies (Berman & McLaughlin 1975), we looked at schools supported by federal and state programs that had either evolved better ways of helping schools improve or used strategies different from those examined by Rand. (P. 4)

The study pointed out that there are a great many schools around the country where careful, thoughtful efforts to improve have been successful in many ways, resulting in benefits to students, teachers, and the school as a whole. And these successes are not random. These have resulted from deliberate efforts on the part of federal and state governments to encourage and support school growth.

The DESSI study used qualitative techniques to probe the dynamics of the school improvement process (Loucks, 1983). The researchers observed that there was consistent and, frequently, major changes in teachers' classroom approaches, strategies, and materials. Through discussions with teachers, building and district administrators, and with individuals who have provided funding and support, the researchers were able to isolate factors that contributed to the success of the programs. The three important factors were:

- * Training by credible people--often former teachers--that included follow-up activities
- * Assistance and support by an array of players, including other teachers, principals, district staff, and external trainers and linkers

- * Attention to factors contributing to institutionalization (ensuring that the new practice remained), including line items on budgets, orienting new or reassigned staff, and writing the new program into curriculum guidelines. (Loucks, 1983)

Fullan Model

The Fullan model focuses on change at the institutional level. He explains that "many attempts at change fail because no distinction is made between theories of change (what causes change) and theories of changing (how to influence those causes)" (Fullan, 1982, p.7). He proposed eight organizational factors, and four process variables for successful change toward school improvement (Fullan, 1985).

According to Fullan (1982, p. 40), going through the phases of change "is not a linear process but rather one in which events at one phase can feed back to alter decisions taken at previous states, which then are processed to work their way through in a continuous interactive way." He cautions that changes usually take more time than allotted, because it is a process not an event.

Change facilitators must possess three types of knowledge and skills: technical expertise related to the appropriate content area, interpersonal skill, and conceptual and technical skills related to planning and implementing change (Fullan, 1982). Fullan identifies five dilemmas or problems that arise in the management of change process (Fullan, 1986).

Fullan and Pomfret (1975) emphasized that full use of any program is not instantaneous and is not achieved without problems program implementators need information about how the change effort is progressing. This feedback is essential if the implementation of a program is to become a routine pattern of users.

The Curriculum and Instruction

The curriculum of a Christian college should be Christ centered. It should have clear outline of immediate, intermediate, and ultimate goals, because most students follow teachers' leading; and in turn teachers are led by the curriculum of the college. This places a very heavy responsibility on teachers' shoulders.

There are three types of curriculum present in any school, viz., formal, informal, and hidden curriculum. Akers (June-July,1980, p.20) defines these terms as follows:

"Formal curriculum--What is commonly taught in classes that are normally a part of elementary, secondary, or higher education program.

"Informal curriculum--What is taught through learning experiences that are not part of formal course.

"Hidden curriculum--What is taught unintentionally through either the formal or informal curriculum".

How the curriculum is taught is also important. There are many research based proven methods of teaching that a Christian teacher must learn and practice in order to bring the best in his students.

The following case study will help understand an attempt at integrating faith and learning in a teacher education program.

A CASE IN POINT: AN EXPERIMENT AT SPICER MEMORIAL COLLEGE

Spicer Memorial College is located in Poona, India. It is a Seventh-day Adventist institution of higher learning. It offers both undergraduate and graduate programs of study. Teacher education course of study is offered both at undergraduate and graduate levels. In the 1993-'94 school year the undergraduate section had an enrolment of 978 and the graduate section had 155. Of all these students 82 students are in the teacher education program.

The curriculum and teaching strategies utilized in the Teacher Education program at Spicer Memorial College was not very different from that of the other Teacher Education Institutions in India. In fact the teachers took great pride in stating that it was comparable with any of these institutions. I for one prepared and taught lessons that were objective driven and examination oriented; Competition was encouraged. I did not involve myself with the students beyond the classroom sessions. If I should look back on my teaching I would say that I had left the students in a sink or swim situation. Now I think there are these and many other alternative approaches to effective teaching and learning. In fairness to me it may be appropriate to mention here that I did follow the guidelines given by the Adventist church in maintaining the Christian standards of the institution.

At the beginning of the school year 1993-'94 the three teachers in the School of Education put their minds together to restructure the entire program to consciously integrate faith and learning in it. This program is in place only for a year now. Hence measurable outcomes are not visible as

yet. The restructuring was made on the basis of the formal, informal, and hidden curriculums.

Each one of the three teachers attempted the integration of faith and learning. Here is how I attempted to integrate faith and learning in the graduate courses I taught at Spicer Memorial College. The courses were Psychology of Learning, Philosophy of Education, Foundations of Curriculum Development, Improving Instruction, and Supervision of Instruction.

Formal curriculum

The syllabi-- I rewrote the syllabi for the five courses I was teaching to make sure the subject matter correlated with the other courses in the program of study. A very formal statement was introduced at the beginning of a course to justify the inclusion of that course in the Teacher Education program at Spicer Memorial College. In a wider sense mention was made about the usefulness of a course in the teaching profession. The teachers did bring out in their syllabi the idea -- all truth is God's truth; meaning every course of study has its foundation in the Bible.

The course of study-- The essays in Christ in the Classroom series, Seventh-day Adventist Secondary Curriculum, as well as the theme of The Journal of Adventist Education (May-June,1994) suggest various ways in which to integrate faith and learning in the different disciplines of study at the elementary and high school levels. These and similar principles were used in teaching as they are workable at the higher education level too.

Here is a brief synopsis of the way I tried to integrate faith and learning in the five graduate courses I taught.

1. Psychology of Learning -- I conducted a careful study to present the behavioristic (reductionistic) and cognitive psychologies in proper perspective. The syllabus reflected the complete development of a person in terms of spiritual, mental, physical, and social realms. One of the areas stressed was the value of interpersonal relationship in the light of divine worth of an individual.

2. Philosophy of Education -- The restructured course contained two parts - contemporary philosophies of education, and integration of faith and learning in the classroom. (Colon, 1994, has developed a very useful course outline for integration of faith and learning). In it I attempted to highlight the concept of a human person. It also tried to answer the question "What does person need for a life time?" A special attention was drawn to the basic premises of idealism- reason, think and you will be the master of your body and mind; realism- ultimate reality is what you perceive through your senses; humanism- the potential for fulfillment is within man, man on his own can be what he wants to be; etc. The students did some research to find out how these views

differed from the theistic view. A debate on the "Great Conversations" was a very fruitful exercise.

3. Foundations of Curriculum Development -- This course was modified to help students prepare Christ centered curriculum with emphasis on integration of faith and learning. This concept was clearly visible in the curriculums developed.

4. Improving Instruction -- (a) I started classes with a short devotional and prayer. The devotional in some cases related to the course material to follow. (b) Teachers prepared lesson outline for the classes they taught. (c) Teachers taught several research based methods of instruction (Joyce and Wail, 1986) in the class. The repertoire of methods was provided to give them latitude to deal with any subject matter confidently. I myself practiced the methods I taught the student teachers. Student teachers were presented with the technique of establishing their own most preferred learning style and that of their students so that they can use various methods of teaching to help students according to their needs.

5. Supervision of Instruction -- After giving them the theory and some practice I required the student teachers to supervise each others' practice teaching using the coaching technique (Joyce and Showers, 1988) and cognitive coaching technique (Costa, 1984). It was my endeavor to help each student teacher realize the value of individual differences, personality types, interdependence, and willingness to help each other develop and work at their full professional capacity.

Informal curriculum

A number of activities at Spicer Memorial College are not a part of the formal curriculum. Here are a few of them.

1. Learning Buddies -- During a scheduled semester course of study, for a period of two to three weeks, students were paired together to work on certain projects. The partners are changed every two to three weeks.
2. Learning Skills Center -- The teacher education students helped elementary and high school students with their difficulties.
3. Assistance at schools -- The student teachers helped in the spiritual, academic, and social activities as per the elementary and high school requests.
4. Chapel exercises -- The student teachers in consultation with the Academic Dean scheduled appointments for the speakers and activities for some of the chapel exercises.
5. Social Activities -- The student teachers under the guidance of the Dean of School of Education planned and carried out social activities for the School.

6. Seminars and workshops -- The student teachers worked on all the preliminary arrangements to make seminars and workshops worth while.
7. Group activities -- The student teachers worked on the course related projects in groups of four or five.
8. Rapport building -- A two day seminar was held for the students to make them aware of the Arthur Costa's (UCLA) rapport building technique.

Hidden curriculum

It is difficult to isolate curriculum and activities for the hidden curriculum. However, this curriculum influences more than what teachers intend to convey. Often its effects are not immediately visible. The college climate, the faculty life-style, the student teacher relationship, the teacher teacher, and the administration teacher relationship have much to do with it.

Due to a short (one year) duration of the implementation of the restructured program, only some of the many possible effects were observed.

Nurturant effects

As a result of the restructured teacher education program the teacher education students are

1. united.
2. taking active part in the religious activities of the college.
3. as a group going out for branch sabbath school activities.
4. more understanding of each others points of view.
5. taking on leadership roles to independently organize activities.
6. intelligently participating in the discussion.
7. turning in their assignments on time.
8. relating to students more positively.
9. having better control over their classes.
10. patient with their students.

Looking to the future

1. The teacher education students will be exposed to the 16 volumes of Seventh-day Adventist Secondary curriculum prepared by South Pacific Division. These guides would be of great help to them in integrating faith and learning in their own curriculum development.

2. Faculty of the school of education would consider actively participating in the service oriented programs such as adult literacy and community health
3. Other college faculty members would be encouraged to join the service oriented activities.
4. The faculty members of the teacher education program would meet together to evaluate the last year's efforts and make necessary modifications, changes, deletions, and additions.

The end note

What I would like to say as the end note is very well put by Akers (Dec.-Jan., 1993,94;p.6) "...the integration of faith and learning exists not in programs and materials, but in people". As teacher educators, let us perceive the student teachers as persons created in the image of God with full potential to let the chain reaction continue, that many may live full and rich lives on this earth now and be prepared for the life to come.

All said and done, I believe, unless we make God the first and the best in all our endeavors we will not succeed in the true sense of the word. In integrating faith and learning into any academic program we need the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Let us tap this source of all knowledge.

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