

BIBLE COLLEGE CONSULTATION 2018



Training for Ministry:

The biblical purpose of theological education

Dr. Brian A de Vries, 19 June 2018

Introduction



What is the purpose of theological education?

What is your *raison d'être* as a teaching institution?

1. What is the purpose of theological education?
2. Implications of a biblical purpose for education
3. Consequences of a biblical purpose for education

The purpose of education?



- “The purpose of education has always been to every one, in essence, the same—to give the [learners] the things they need in order to develop in an orderly, sequential way into members of society.” —**John Dewey**, “Individual Psychology and Education,” *The Philosopher*, 12, 1934.
- “The one continuing purpose of education, since ancient times, has been to bring people to as full a realization as possible of what it is to be a human being.” —**Arthur Foshay**, “The Curriculum Matrix: Transcendence and Mathematics,” *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, 1991

The purpose of education?



“The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically.”

— **Martin Luther King Jr.**,
speech at Morehouse
College, 1948



The purpose of education?



- A common consensus:
Education does not have a single purpose; it serves multiple objectives, and the relative importance of each of these objectives can be very personal.
- To cultivate a skilled and/or effective workforce
- To serve social needs or contribute to the economy
- To teach cultural literacy or to develop the intellect
- To promote a particular social or political system

The purpose of education?



Classified according to motives/philosophy:

Individual	Personal advancement, to grow and develop, an opportunity to get ahead
Secular	To teach, or pass on information, from one person to another – basically... shuffling papers, shuffling knowledge...
Societal [agendas]	Poverty alleviation, social upliftment, Community transformation, etc.
Specific [agendas]	Indoctrination, political aspirations, military recruitment, discipleship, etc.

Models of theological education



- What is the **purpose** theological education?
... and upon which **model** is it based?
 - Discipleship of Jesus
 - University of Europe
 - Apprenticeship model
 - Vocational training



- What model(s) are being used for education in **southern Africa**?

Theological education's purpose



How is the **model** of education influenced by one's definition of the **purpose** of theological education?

CLASSICAL Transforming the individual ATHENS Academy	Knowing God CONFESSIONAL GENEVA Seminary
THEOLOGIA MISSIOLOGY	DOXOLOGY SCIENTIA
JERUSALEM Community MISSIONAL Converting the world	BERLIN University Strengthening the church VOCATIONAL

Survey biblical motives



- **Preparation**
Church leaders "equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ..." (Eph 4:12)
- **Instruction**
"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15)
- **Mentorship**
"What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2)
- **Correction**
"[Apolllos] began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him and explained to him the way of God more accurately" (Acts 18:26)

Theological education's purpose



Theological education serves the church...
by training church leadership and members...
to equip all the believers for ministry work...
to prepare Christians to fulfill their mission.

To serve the Church in fulfilling its mission by training Christian leaders and members.

To support the Church (local & global) in its mission to fulfill Christ's command of teaching all nations.

Survey of recent literature

- 1999 **Robert Banks**, *Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models*
- 2001 **Bernhard Ott**, *Beyond Fragmentation: Integrating Mission and Theological Education*
- 2005 **Malcolm Warford**, *Practical Wisdom on Theological Teaching and Learning*
- 2006 **Linda Cannell**, *Theological Education Matters: Leadership Education for the Church*
- 2011 **Perry Shaw**, *Transforming Theological Education: A Practical Handbook for Integrative Learning*
- 2015 **Justo González**, *The History of Theological Education*
- 2015 **Rupen Das**, *Connecting Curriculum with Context: A Handbook for Context Relevant Curriculum Development in Theological Education*
- 2016 **Bernhard Ott**, *Understanding and Developing Theological Education*



Theological education's purpose



To serve the Church in fulfilling its mission by training Christian leaders and members

Our raison d'être is "Training for Ministry"

Implications for Bible education



Theological education is...

1. More than just an academic exercise

- We must NOT be anti-intellectual
- We must NOT be in slavery to the “idol of academia”
- Academics must be in submission to Christ



So... academics is a vital tool to accomplish our mission

Implications for Bible education



Theological education is...

2. More than just knowledge & critical thinking

“The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. But education which stops with efficiency may prove the greatest menace to society. The most dangerous criminal may be the man gifted with reason but no morals. ... We must remember that intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education.” —Martin Luther King Jr., 1948.



So... our focus is more inclusive than knowledge acquisition

Implications for Bible education



Theological education is...

3. More than just skills development

- Though noble objectives, we do NOT exist to...
 - to prepare students/workers for society
 - to train the masses, to solve problem of illiteracy
 - to eliminate poverty and suffering
 - to reduce dangerous social concepts

We are equipping the believers for ministry work

Implications for Bible education



Theological education is...

4. More than just social transformation

- More than the preservation of a particular culture
- More than the promotion of a political agenda



– We do not get distracted by such things...

We are engaged in a higher calling, a spiritual mission

Implications for Bible education



Theological education is...

1. More than just an academic exercise
2. More than just knowledge & critical thinking
3. More than just skills development
4. More than just social transformation

While academics is a tool to accomplish our mission, the focus is more inclusive than knowledge acquisition.

We are equipping the believers for ministry work;
We are engaged in a higher calling, a spiritual mission.

The mission of education



- Is there anything the church does that is outside of God's mission?
- So all education of the church should serve the church in its mission to be witnesses of Christ in the world.

God's Mission
Mission of the Church

Christian Education

Theo. Ed.

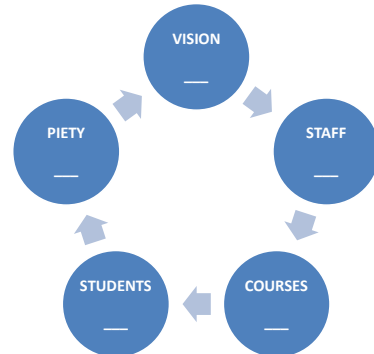
- Can there ever be a place or time when theological education is outside of the mission of the church?
- The place of theological education is to be missional in the sense that it serves the church in the local context.

Outcome of a missional purpose

How should our educational ministries be aligned with God's vision and mission?

- 1. Missional VISION (plans)
- 2. Missional STAFF (people)
- 3. Missional COURSES (programs)
- 4. Missional STUDENTS (prophets)
- 5. Missional PIETY (prayers)

Assess your own institution



Score your own institution

- Missional VISION _____ x 20 _____
- Missional STAFF _____ x 35 _____
- Missional COURSES _____ x 35 _____
- Missional STUDENTS _____ x 55 _____
- Missional PIETY _____ x 55 _____

Total = _____

Score your own institution

- Missional VISION 5 x 2.0 10.0
- Missional STAFF 4 x 3.5 14.0
- Missional COURSES 3 x 3.5 10.5
- Missional STUDENTS 2 x 5.5 11.0
- Missional PIETY 4 x 5.5 22.0

Total = 67.5 %

Theological education's purpose

**To serve the Church in fulfilling its mission
by training Christian leaders and members**

Our *raison d'être* is "Training for Ministry"