Bible, but by praise of the sublime God who goes the very way of humility in order to extend his Kingdom and to win men to himself.

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A Critical Evaluation of Theological Education in Residential Training

by ANIL D. SOLANKY

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THIS PAPER is not dealing with new methodology or innovations in teaching. I want to give attention to something far more basic: 'What Is Learning?' You will all agree that unless learning takes place, there is no teaching.

According to the Hebrew concept, learning did not mean merely coming to know a body of facts. The Hebrew concept, *daa'th*, means knowledge which is experienced. Knowledge of God, (*daa'th Elohim*) is not merely having information about God. It implies entering into an intimate personal relationship with him. Also the verb *yada'* (to know) is used in a very personal way: Adam knew Eve. So knowledge here is to enter into relationship, into experience. Knowledge must mean experience, competence, and ability to use acquired skills.

Our traditional view of learning is content-oriented. Students are expected to master content or information and then reproduce it in examinations. This may sound like a caricature but as far as my experience is concerned, I have found this true in most of the theological colleges and their courses. Recently I met a teacher coming out of a class toward the end of the term, who exclaimed, 'My! I wish I had another month to cover all that!' So content is the problem of the teacher as well as the problem of an average student. As someone has said, enthusiastic teachers and committed students are at the mercy of a poor concept of teaching and learning. Peter Savage points out that this concept of education—that knowledge is a body of information is based on a Greek view. It is alien to the Biblical understanding of knowledge. p. 125

WEAKNESSES IN CONTENT APPROACH

1. Too much content to master

One obvious weakness of the content approach is the impossibility of mastering even an infinitesimal part of today's knowledge. The great explosion of knowledge in the second half of the 20th century makes the meaningful coverage of content impossible. So what is learning? Some define it as behavioural development or change in a student as distinct

from mere growth in age. To put it in simple words, it is development and ability to do certain activities.

As you may be aware, there are radical educationalists like Ivan Illich who speak of 'de-schooling society'. Some theological educators want to do away with traditional residential schooling. But there are still those who will die to maintain the *status quo* even though it dehumanises the person who passes through the process. I take a mediating position. I still recommend continuing residential training but would couple with it a change in the concept of learning and education.

2. Lack of a clearly defined idea of our end-product

What kind of person do we expect to see emerging at the end of the training we give? Dr. Devadasan says that the whole system of education becomes meaningful only with reference to an understanding of the end-product. What do we expect the students to be and to do at the end of their course of study? Answers here are vague. The end-product depends not only upon the content we teach but also on our methods. If we teach people merely by pouring out information to be memorised, and testing them to see if they absorbed it, we find them losing the faculty to think. After they have slaved to pass exams and earn a degree, they feel they have reached their goal. So they do not want to look at a book again or do any further academic work.

Some Christian ministers are known to be the laziest, most out-of-date of any men in any profession. Concerned only with their position and prestige, they have become a class of people cut off from the community and least competent professionally. I met one such pastor on a certain Saturday evening, who had something in mind he wanted to preach on but didn't know where to find a Bible passage to fit it! Is this the end-product theological institutes take pride in producing?

3. Dominance of the administrative side in education

By this I mean there is a tendency to set up a system and expect men to fit into it, instead of seeking to understand the needs of man and setting up a system that meets their needs. So the system becomes sacrosanct and all students must bow to it. We have students in theological colleges who are average, but there are a few who are brilliant. Yet we put them all through the same slot of a three-year BD programme, set up for the best of the average students. I have seen a young man with good qualities and spiritual insight who could not make the grade academically in the three-year programme. He needed more time. But since there was no arrangement for that, he had to discontinue his theological studies. Many average students work and work but do not see success, become discouraged and drop out. On the other hand, the brilliant student, from lack of challenge, becomes lethargic and discontented.

The examination system says 'Pass' or 'Fail'. There is no measure of improvement an individual has made over himself, and there is no recognition of his input—his effort. So the brilliant student, with scarcely any effort, can go from success to success while another, giving everything he has to make the grade, goes from failure to failure. Is this justified? Should not the administration seek to find a way to evaluate the student against himself, to recognise his individual development, and help him at his own pace to achieve the standard of achievement required to earn his BD degree?

4. Disregard for the affective domain

The affective domain means the feeling (limbic) brain, which psychologists tell us plays a key role in all education. How is it that theological institutions neglect this tremendously

important area of emotion which is the key to all motivation, which enriches all social relationships and is so vital in religious experience? How is it that we recognise only mental achievement and mark 'pass' or 'fail' only on the basis of academic standing?

It is often assumed that a person's character is an individual matter, whereas his marks or grades are an institutional matter. Therefore, the cognitive domain of academic development receives attention to the neglect of the affective domain or emotional, social and spiritual enrichment.

Evaluation of progress in the affective domain is extremely difficult and, as a result, procedures for this are seldom considered.

5. Competition, not co-operation, prime motivation

At present education is based on competition. Constant emphasis is put on the belief that students will only work for a prize or from pressure of desire to be first or to receive a certificate, and that without these inducements most students will not work at all. This seems to be the appalling result of the acquisitive and utilitarian aims of our educational system. One wants to go higher and higher even at the cost of others. Hence our examination-ridden classrooms are no training ground for honesty, sincerity and free growth towards maturity.

SOME PROPOSALS FOR OVERCOMING THESE WEAKNESSES

Allow me to make a few moderate proposals which I believe will help us do a better job of teaching in our residential theological institutions.

1. Let us begin with a behavioural development approach

Our selection of content, methods of teaching and evaluation (testing) make sense only when we have the end-product in mind. Dr. Devadasan gives an example of the carpenter who makes a chair. Before he begins, he has his pattern clearly in mind. Every piece must fit into the pattern. His way of working and the materials he chooses are determined by the pattern he has before him.

(a) *What do I want to develop in the person?* Education must be centred on the person. His natural interests reflect his need to understand the world and find his place in it. Each person has a basic urge to do or to make things, to know and to think, and to love and be loved. There are three areas of development or domains: cognitive (knowing, thinking, etc.); affective (feeling, appreciation, interest, etc.); psychemotor (willing and doing). A Chinese proverb says:

> I listen and I forget,
> I see and I remember,
> I do and I understand.

Hence there can be cross-play or interaction between several areas or domains. One can learn more by doing than simply by listening. One must give consideration to all domains in the development of the person.

The syllabi need to make the atural interests of students the starting-point of education, of 'drawing out' all the student's faculties. There should be scope for reflection (doing theology), reasoning, analysing, arguing the case and creative thinking. In such an atmosphere, courses become meaningful and have a practical bearing on life.

For example, take a course on the prophets. In order to make the course relevant, we know students will need to develop certain skills. They must have the ability to:

(1) Outline the content of each prophetic book.
(2) Identify the historical situation in which each prophet worked.
(3) Recognise the relationship between the prophet's message and his historical situation.
(4) Apply the message of the prophet to the situation today.

You will notice that each of these objectives is progressive in the development of student behaviour. Here the teacher has to list *specific* objectives to answer his questions: What are the practical abilities and types of behaviour which the student needs to develop to achieve the end product? He can find the answer only as he is clear about what that end-product is.

(b) *How best can I develop the abilities of the person?* This question is concerned with methods, materials and activities employed by the teacher. If his aim is clear, even the content he uses will become the means, not the end, of achieving the essential p. 129 behavioural objectives. Now, if all you want to produce in your students is the ability to be good scribes, just go on dictating detailed notes in the class!

(c) *How can I evaluate the development in the person?* Here we see a vital relationship between what we want to develop and what we want to test. Having identified objectives and chosen methods for use in achieving these objectives., it is also necessary to devise suitable devices to find out to what extent the goals have been achieved. This is a radical conept of evaluation. It is not to pass or fail a student, but to find out how much development has taken place! Each test item is to be designed keeping in mind not only the topic covered but also the objective in view. This third question will also force us to evaluate our methods, materials, and activities performed by the student in terms of the product. This will also help the teacher to modify his methods and activities in a logical way.

2. Let us lift instruction step by step to the highest level of learning

Dr. Devadasan says: 'Failure in educational institutions may be due to the use of unsuitable student behaviour in teaching and learning. Much of the failure of our academic institutions is because we attempt to make pupils remember knowledge instead of developing interests, skills, attitudes and application.' He develops five levels of learning. Let me name them:

(a) *Rote memory level*, including imitating, duplicating, repeating and copying. At this level the learner repeats something a number of times so as to make it automatic.

(b) *Recognition level*, including recognising, identifying, remembering and recalling. Learning at this level requires some mental manipulation beyond mere imitation.

(c) *Restatement level*, including comparing, relating, distinguishing, clarifying, illustrating and reformulating. Students at this level may have little difficulty in recognising, identifying and recalling, and their performance in external examinations will be superior to those who are wholly prepared for recalling or remembering, etc. The teacher in preparing a student at this level should provide a number of opportunities for comparing related things, distinguishing, illustrating, classifying, and so on.

(d) *Application level*, including analysing, formulating hypothesis, p. 130 drawing inference, explaining, defining, predicting, estimating, interpreting and making critical judgements. One can readily see this is a higher level of learning than previously considered, and must build on the other levels. The student must reach the level where he applies what he is learning to actual situations to see if it works.

(e) *Transfer level*, including reorganising, formulating new theory or hypothesis, discovering, creating, inventing and solving complex problems. This involves putting the

learning to use in new situations, combining it with other aspects of learning and coming up with creative work.

In all our training it is important that we aim towards eventually covering the five levels of learning and thus producing creative persons. All should be creative at their own level of ability.

3. Let us evaluate at every level of learning

Our evaluation must take into account the level of learning reached by the student in a given field. Also, the domains should be covered. Certain ways of testing are appropriate for certain types of behaviour. For example: assignment to test classifying, analysing, essay questions to test describing, organising, etc.; objective questions to test recall or memory.

The purpose of the test is to help the teacher or student realise whether the goals are achieved or not, and to make the student more goal-conscious than exam-conscious. Before a paper is prepared, it is necessary to decide the weightage to be given to different objectives (knowledge, understanding, application), topics, and types of questions (essay, short essay, short answer).

It is suggested that there should be a minimum number of options in a given paper. Options decrease the measuring efficiencies of the test, give a false impression of coverage of topics and work against the interest of the average student. If options are given at all, they should be internal options, i.e. either .. or. Both alternatives should be devised to test the same ability or behavioural development.

4. Let us aim towards flexibility

There must be flexibility in our programmes. Can there not be a one-year, three-year and a four-year BD programme in order to allow students to go at their own pace? This will give everyone a chance to succeed, given the necessary time and tools. A slow student can take fewer hours and develop at a slower pace while a faster one can speed ahead. Where a student should fit in could be decided after his first term of work.

Extension programmes, especially programmed instruction, emphasise this aspect of flexibility very much, for each course is set up so that a student may learn at his own pace.

5. Let us develop the affective domain

The approach for the cognitive domain can equally be applied to the affective domain. But the actual procedures may differ. Let me give an individual illustration. A monk who became very callous and dry followed a friend's suggestion to do a bit of gardening. He planted some flowers and watched the plants grow until the flowers appeared. Then a cow came. (This must have been in India!) The cow ate all the plants and flowers, and the man, who had never cried in his mature life, began weeping. His affective domain had been touched.

Opportunity for individuals to develop spiritually through meditation, prayer and discipline must be provided for.

Group activities, such as games, sports and projects give good opportunities for development in this area. For example, in playing volleyball, one may channel his *ego* into ambition for reaching team goals. He learns team co-operation, respect for orders, fair play, justice, and willingness to accept defeat. He develops qualities of leadership and unselfishness in willingness to give others a chance rather than to dominate the scene. Also, large group activities can be planned, such as worship services or retreats.

This domain including the emotional, social and spiritual development of the person, is most important for the theological student who wishes to become an effective minister.

6. Let us train students to work together

The apostle Paul reminds us that the best things in life can be gained only through working together ([Ephesians 4:13](#), [15](#)). So education should not be setting one student against another. Personal responsibility and individual talents should be developed p. 132 within the framework of a co-operative community. The most delicate task of education, and a supremely important one, is to help the growing personality recognise the claims of divine standards and be moved to respond. Every student has to grow towards the ideal Christ, the man for others. Each student has to learn that his self-regarding and aggressive impulses must be sublimated and redirected, because his own life can only reach its full flowering and fruition in the community of his fellows. This is not to say that there should be no reward for outstanding achievements of individuals within the group, but it should be given as recognition of their contribution to united effort and common goals, rather than as a prize for which to compete.

7. Let us teach with inspiration and enthusiasm

Marjorie Sykes says: 'Most of our teachers do not need training, they need conversion. They need to be turned right round mentally, to look at their work from a new point of view.' Person-centred education will bring a new dynamic into the teaching situation. Without this conversion, mere training in a new technique of teaching will only replace one static system with another.

But teaching is a noble profession; it is not only a science, but an art. Knowing subject-matter is not enough. Skills in communication, in psychological understanding of persons, in evaluating readiness, in the knowledge of how persons learn and how to adapt methods to each situation—all are important aspects of teaching.

Above all, one must recognise the place of the Holy Spirit. Dr. Maurice Culver raises the question, 'Do we have gifts of teaching naturally or can we get them from God if we are assigned teaching ministry? It seems to me that an affirmative answer to the question indicates a strong spiritual quality inherent in these gifts. There is more than perfection of techniques, there is more than development of art and style, there is more than thorough knowledge of the subject; there is also a spiritual quality of attitude, dedication, wisdom, insight, and love in an inspired teacher.'

To put it simply, the ministry of the Holy Spirit must be recognised in our teaching. We can hinder or aid the divine flow of life called 'being filled with the Holy Spirit'. The Holy Spirit who inspires us is also the inspirer within the student using our p. 133 humble methods and personalities to the glory of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

What we need is not just innovations or better methods but a radical change in our concept of education: learning as experience, *versus* gathering content, a body of information. We must treat our students as persons, not as boxes to be filled little by little, with little, logically arranged, packets of information. We must expect them to develop abilities, to grow in the experience of the Lord ([II Peter 3:18](#)). Our Lord did not say, '… teaching all nations all (content) I have commanded you', but rather, '… teaching all nations to observe all that I have commanded you' ([Matthew 28:19–20](#)). So Christian education is teaching everyone to *observe*, to do, to carry out, to experience all God's Word to man.

The Volitional Domain

Lyle Darnauer

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From a variety of sources we are confronted with the fact of neglect in this area of learning. A great deal of education is being criticised for not being practice-oriented: at the best we are merely stuffing heads with a bunch of facts, with useless knowledge at the worst. Seminaries are no exception to this criticism. Many is the time we have heard people commenting as they came out of church: 'The preacher surely stirred us, but what are we supposed to do now?' indicating that not much of any practical use was said about how we are to apply or use the lessons we have heard from the Bible. A common complaint about Sunday school type lessons is that they tell a story well, perhaps may even get the emotions aroused, but then end up with a very simplistic and general kind of moral, rather than aiming at some specific action. Again, a criticism directed at much of what comes under the heading of Christian teaching involves the idea of hearing the same old 'shalts' and 'shalt nots' again and again.

I believe that one of the basic objectives of seminary training of any sort, should be to produce what I call 'practical prophets'. These are Christian leaders who see and feel the injustices of their own era (as the Bible prophets did) and bring God's judgement and warning to bear on them. This is not to be done in some abstract and generalised fashion but rather in terms of specifics, a step-by-step knowledge setting out the steps the Christian can and should be taking to set right those injustices on his doorstep. As indicated in my book *Teaching and Learning in the Christian Church*, this neglect of the volitional domain, or if you prefer it, the action of the prophetic domain, is unusual, for this seems to be the logical and Biblical goal of all our teaching and efforts at making disciples. This is the practical side of knowledge and the result of desired attitudes, values, and beliefs. p. 135

In line with the taxonomies of the cognitive and affective domains, I have taken five levels for the volitional domain, which correspond roughly to those used in the other two domains. It can most easily be pictured as a sort of ideal maturation in actions as a child grows from early childhood to a mature adulthood. At first, the child is aware of demands made on him for some sort of action. As he is socialised in his family he gradually becomes aware that there are choices possible in actions. From there he gradually progresses to responses which involve more and more a weighing of acts and responses. There will be movement from behaviour because of external authority, to behaviour because of internal compulsion. As a person moves upward through these development levels, there will be a move to organise behaviour into some sort of pattern or system. Finally, in a truly mature person there will be the development which allows and enables the person to meet new situations and fit such into the system of organised and internalised behaviours