



Thursday, June 18, 2020

## Q & A

Ray Pennings answers in **blue**

Dr. Glen Schultz answers in **red**

**1. For Ray Pennings: how would you respond to someone like Annie Kidder (People for Education in Ontario), who would argue that private/independent schools cannot possibly pass as schools that serve public education if they are not free and accessible to everyone? How does 'private education for the public good' counter the public equity education argument? Should Christian schools rethink admission criteria, for example, in response to this critique?**

Several points in response.

1. The core point I would make is that the definition of “public” should be outcome based. Schools that serve the public good are public schools, regardless of which portion of the public they serve and how they are paid for.
2. North America in general and Ontario in particular are the outliers in the world when it comes to which schools are paid for by the government and how. There are lots of examples regarding different funding models, tax credit systems, scholarships etc. which can address the equity of access question.
3. I would argue that a more generous policy towards all sorts of school is more of an inclusive and equity argument than the presumption that the only way to have equity and access is to insist everyone goes to a single taxpayer funded system. I wrote a piece last year in the Toronto Star (<https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/2019/08/12/independent-schools-contribute-to-the-public-good-and-deserve-public-support.html>) highlighting how in Australia, funding models for independent schools were used as a strategy to address inequality.
4. As I mentioned in my talk, I don't think there is a “one size fits all” approach for admission criteria that need to be implemented. Allowing diverse school systems and structures to exist and flourish will make it more likely that a wider range of educational programs will be offered.

**2. With the idea of Christian school inclusivity in mind, what is your advice for creating an environment at a school that is both an outreach ministry and a discipleship ministry that can serve both students who are lost and students who are believers simultaneously?**

I am not sure that a school needs to make that stark a difference between students who are lost and students who are believers in terms of their strategy. A Christian school makes it very clear

that the starting point for education is God's revelation of Himself and that learning includes learning about who God is, who we are as human beings, and the vocation that we have in the world. Students may be at very different stages of their understanding of these things based on their home and church background. But it may be that a student whose heart is not right with God has a very advanced understanding intellectually of a biblical worldview and that a believing student has a very elementary understanding of these things. Cultivating an environment in which we are not afraid of honest questions is essential. In that environment, we appeal to the mind as well as the heart. The care of the school and staff for the whole person is what will be noticed and create the openings for deeper discussions.

I answered this live yesterday and I think Ray has answered it well.

**3. Could it be that we are so used to living a dualistic life (separating the religious from the secular activities) that we cannot perceive what it means to live all of life through a biblical lens? How do we do that? The first year I taught "integrating" the Bible into the curriculum and, although I was a Christian, I couldn't answer the question. What is your suggestion?**

Dualism is never something that will be totally overcome and living all of life with a biblical understanding and obedience will be something that we will have to wait for the new heavens and the new earth to fully experience. That said, I agree with your sentiment that much of the North American church has adopted a functional dualism which makes the task of Christian education doubly challenging (and arguably doubly important!)

My understanding of integrating the Bible into the curriculum does not require an explicit text and verse approach (although by all means, reference Scripture when it is applicable.) In thinking through any subject matter, the creation/fall/redemption/restoration lens can help identify ways of integrating biblical teaching into the curriculum. There are many good resources available to help think through various subject area and I would encourage you to utilize them.

It begins with each of us as individuals constantly going through the process of renewing the mind. In Kingdom Education, I devote two chapters to this dilemma. One is on dualism and the other is on renewing the mind. I have also done a short video with an exercise attached to help an individual identify truth and error. In the exercise, individuals have to address a lot of real-life issues and find God's truth claims and Satan's lies related to each issue. I will also address this in Friday's session.

**4. Can you give any examples of schools that were near closing, in average and below economic neighborhoods, and turned around to become 21st Century high tech, Christ Immersion, compelling institution that are thriving and growing dramatically. Almost all models put forward by the school associations are strong already and are in professional high-income settings.**

While many of the more prominent examples of thriving, Christian schools are supported by communities with above average income levels, there are many schools who operate without significant financial resources and do a very good job. I hesitate to publicly cite examples, as the schools that I am familiar with that come to mind don't necessarily fully meet the description of "21<sup>st</sup> century high tech, Christ-immersion, compelling" models – most are works

in progress that meet some but not all of these. Cardus commissioned some case studies regarding various innovative schools in Canada (<https://www.cardus.ca/research/education/excellence-in-education/pursuing-school-excellence/>) and researchers are currently engaged in a similar project studying various schools in the United States. I understand that specifically looking at schools that are seeking to serve economically disadvantaged constituencies is part of that research – look for it coming to our website likely early next year (although I am uncertain how the Covid complications have impacted the research timelines.)

I would encourage you to contact Renewation at [Renewation.org](http://Renewation.org). They have been working with several schools in revitalization efforts. I do not think that a school must be a “21<sup>st</sup> Century high tech” school to be a true kingdom-focused school that produces disciples of Jesus Christ.

**5. Dr. Ray.....You said that Christian schools represent the future of public education.....could you shed a little more light on that?**

Education will emerge as a significant public policy conversation in the decade to come, I think, for at least three reasons.

1. The North American educational outcomes compared to other countries in the world, are disappointing considering the resources that we spend on education. (<https://hechingerreport.org/what-2018-pisa-international-rankings-tell-us-about-u-s-schools/>). This sense is reinforced by the everyday experiences of graduates, employers, and society as a whole who are encountering the results of an education that is not preparing graduates with what is needed to thrive.
2. Technology as well as educational theory is challenging the way we deliver education. The Covid-related study-at-home experiences are going to fast-forward this conversation. Education can be delivered differently and there are many innovative pilots taking place.
3. There is a recognition in educational theory that education is for the whole person, and not just for the intellect. While holistic education means different things to different people in our secularized society, the conversation provides openings for different types of schools to contribute.

The core argument I made in this presentation is that rather than leaving this conversation for those involved in government-delivered education and policy, Christian schools are well-positioned to be the drivers of innovation. Much of what happens in Christian schools can serve as a learning opportunity and exemplar regarding what a modern, inclusive, pluralistic and flourishing delivery of education can look like. I am not suggesting we engage with a hubris that suggests we have it all figured out. But the hard data Cardus has collected can be used to make the case that non-government schools in general and Christian schools in particular are achieving results that most would aspire that the government system might achieve.

**6. What were the common characteristics of the turn-around? Stress again very strong spiritually and academically.**

Not entirely sure what you mean by “turn-around.” The Cardus data seeks to empirically measure certain things that were, for the most part, not previously measured. Our data should be read as a benchmark. Our website includes five more detailed reports on the US data in addition to the overall report. There we look at how graduates provide an overall evaluation of their high school experiences, “From the Classroom to the Workplace”, a focus on civic engagement, a look at spiritual and faith formation, and social engagement (“The Tie that Binds.”). All of these reports are available for download here.

<https://www.cardus.ca/research/education/cardus-education-survey/us/>

We have seen several schools that you might say have experienced a “turn around” by being a part of KSI for multiple years. The “turn around” that took place started with the school’s leadership embracing the biblical philosophy of education as found in the 14 biblical principles for how God wants us to educate future generations. Then they started to develop an ongoing, comprehensive plan to drive that philosophy into the major culture influences of the school (mission statements, leadership, local church, staff, parents, curriculum etc.)

**7. What can kingdom Education do to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor. All these are far away from the poor and who will help the poor to connect. Statistically the poor are more than the rich.**

This is one of the most important challenges that Christian schools must address. When the biblical philosophy found in *Kingdom Education* is taught to parents and church leaders, it brings about conviction which, in turn, causes them to seek out kingdom-focused schools to help them. That means that the school must be ready to partner with these parents in this endeavor. Financial assistance must be made available, especially when tuition rates are skyrocketing. I am personally burdened for Christians to get back to what I call biblical lifestyle stewardship. If this happens, God work will be resourced to meet every “need” necessary to educate children biblically. This is happening in more and more places around the world.

**8. Just a confession that one is saved - even a strong testimony - does not mean the teacher thinks biblically and sees the subject matter through a biblical worldview. How do we help this happen more naturally?**

I fully agree. Being a Christian does not immediately qualify one to be a Christian school teacher. There are two comments I would make regarding the process.

1. Teaching is a vocation and the good teacher has in his/her toolbox a set of skills that involve not only subject expertise but also an understanding of the process of teaching and learning. While never wanting to lose the sense of “calling” that teachers should feel (I have yet to meet an effective teacher who views it just as a “job”), neither should we be afraid of professional standards and learning. But as with all learning, this doesn’t happen naturally. It takes a conscious commitment and is hard work.
2. The journey will be a life-long one. In addition to the professional growth, there needs to be spiritual growth. As we grow in grace, we will increasingly grow in understanding who

God is, how He works, and the amazing calling that He has placed upon His people in mercy and grace. We are able to teach best when we can teach from experience. The growth of a teacher in their calling will correlate to their own growth in their personal life. Our daily devotions, our participation in a local community of faith where we can grow with fellow-believers and under the ministry of the word – these are necessary for our personal lives but these will also be means by which teachers will grow vocationally.

Some people say that I am a “single issue voter” when it comes to what is needed to do exactly what this person asks. Every school must have continual staff development in biblical worldview development, biblical philosophy of education and then they can adequately address the issue of biblical worldview education. Friday’s session will focus specifically on today’s worldview crisis. I have developed a membership website with resources to help individuals and schools accomplish this task.