

**Christian Education: A Contemporary Approach and Practices to Christian Education**

ATH 613 Theological Research & Writing

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## **Abstract**

Education is a fundamental aspect of life that all individuals seek to attain more knowledge and advance themselves in life. Christian education is the foundation for which believers achieve a closer connection to God. Through Christian education learners are able to learn the Word, and understand their place in society in observance to the Word of God. Seeking to understand the contemporary approaches to Christian education in western and eastern societies will allow for learners to better assist their community, and gain a religious foundation that is within the doctrine and teaching of the Word of God. By reviewing the modern day approach to Christian Education there will be a better understanding of the goals of the educational system, advancement in technology to determine the vitality of Christian Education, and the ability to adapt and thrive through this changing era in time.

## Introduction

Christian Education in this contemporary age needs to evolve and change in order to stay relevant and effective to learners. In addition with the advancement of technologies it is important for Christian Educators to stay up to date with new technologies to assist their students in advancing their careers and opportunities in today's society. However in order to truly understand the relevance of Christian education in society today, there needs to be an understanding of the history of Christian education. After a discussion of the history of Christian education there will be a discussion of the contemporary approach to Christian education. Without first understand the approaches utilized in western nations such as England we will not be able to understand the practices employed to make the programs successful. Not only will this paper examine the approaches utilized by England, but that of our eastern counterparts in China. After all Christianity is not just centralized in one location, but all over the world. To truly gain an understanding of the contemporary approaches to Christian education one must include various nations within the study of the topic of contemporary Christian education. Christian education is of vital importance in the current political and societal era. Christian education is part of the foundational stature of a believer's life.<sup>1</sup> The knowledge obtained through sharing your belief with other believers through a common educational institution is one that is needed in the modern era. In this research proposal readers will begin with a literature review of the articles utilized within the paper.

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<sup>1</sup> Dockery, David S. 2016. "Toward a Future for Christian Higher Education: Learning from the Past, Looking to the Future." *Christian Higher Education* 15, no 1/2: 115. *Advanced Placement Source*, EBSCOhost (accessed October 5, 2017).

## Literature Review

**Dockery, David S. 2016. "Toward a Future for Christian Higher Education: Learning from the Past, Looking to the Future." *Christian Higher Education* 15, no 1/2: 115. *Advanced Placement Source*, EBSCOhost (accessed October 5, 2017).**

The Dockery article does not seek to discuss the many changes occurring in Christian higher education, but it seeks to provide a framework for thinking about the future that is grounded in the church's heritage and tradition. The article sought to establish that at the heart of Christian higher education is a calling to prepare a new generation of Christians to think Christianly, to engage the culture and the academy, to serve society, and to renew connections with the church and its mission. Christian tradition combined with learning is proposed as a pathway forward for understanding the essence of Christian higher education in the modern world. The information provided in this article offers a pathway that focuses on the central and foundational commitments needed to sustain a faithful future for Christian higher education.

**Hulme, E. Eileen, David E. Groom, and Joseph M. Heltzel. "Reimagining Christian Higher Education." *Christian Higher Education* 15, no.1/2 (January 2016): 95-105. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed October 5, 2017).**

Hulme, Groom and Heltzel brought to light the difficulties facing higher Christian education in the United States due to the advancement of technologies, the shift of ethnic and racial demographics, and the transition from traditional degrees to continuous learning environments. Christian education must either adapt to the changes in society, so they may thrive. In order to thrive in this new technological age, Christian higher education institutions need to go beyond the status quo, change the mindset of its leadership and have leaders willing to take the next step to lead their institutions into a new era. Without these new innovations Christian higher education runs the risk of falling behind compared to other higher education institutions.

**Peter Tze Ming, Ng. 2002. "CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION IN CONTEMPORARY CHINA." *Christian Higher Education* 1, no. 1: 55. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed September 14, 2017).**

As we know the United States and European nations are not the only nations practicing Christianity. In Peter Tze Ming Ng's article the discussion focuses on the significance of contemporary Christian higher education in China, and Asia. By examining Chung Chi College of the Chinese University of Hong Kong researchers were able to see what Christian colleges have to offer to higher education in Asia as a whole. The University is rich in cultural and religious heritages, thus making it an excellent venue for the study of the intercultural exchanges and interreligious dialogues. It should be noted that Christian schools in China were predominately missionary schools. Due to the missionaries being the leading force behind the Christian schools there was a massive distrust. Thus Christian schools were criticized as being more evangelical, and impeding on the culture of the nation with Western ideals. However through history and a distinction between the educational role and religious roles of the Christian colleges there has been numerous growth in the region. There were shifts in the thought process of leaders over the past decade that allowed for the growth of Christian education in the region. Through this paper readers are able to see the change in thought that led to the change in the process of Christian higher education in contemporary China.

**Pillay, Gerald J. 2015. "“Higher” Education: A Perspective from a Christian University Foundation in Contemporary England." *Christian Higher Education* 14, no. 1/2: 4-16. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed September 14, 2017).**

Gerald Pillay articulated the long history of Europe's connection with Christian education and the secularized nation. The essay investigates the Liverpool Hope University in the only ecumenical university in the England. The amazing aspect of this University is that though it is a

non-denominational institution it is also apart of the British University system. The author of this article reiterated the long history of religious missions and educational institutions in the 19<sup>th</sup> century England. In addition the author sought to examine the lack of funding due to government changes, the secularization of higher education, and the notion that religion is losing ground and its influence in the public square. The article further went on to discuss the approach of John Henry Newman during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The thought process of Newman's vision was that higher education should be based on learning and teaching, where there is no bias, but illumination. Simply put a higher education institution should be committed to educating in the round, including mind, body and spirit. Fortunately Liverpool Hope University was committed to this sentiment and though based in the theological sense of a well rounded individual there are still challenges being faced by the institutions leaders and stakeholders to uphold this proud tradition.

**Setran, David. 2014. "Guest Editorial "History Matters". Reflections on Studying the History of Christian Education." *Christian Education Journal*, Fall2014. 294. *Supplemental Index*, EBSCOhost (accessed October 5, 2017)**

David Setran in his essay advises the importance of history and the many purposes the importance on reflecting on history. Setran would first argue that the study of the history of Christian education has a foundational purpose, an instructional purpose, an identity formation purpose, a character formation purpose, a self-critical purpose, a prophetic purpose, a corrective purpose, and an inspirational purpose. Each purpose will only lead to a better understanding of the need for Christian education and a deeper understanding of the current trends and fads. Setran would argue that by looking at the past one is able to adapt to the contemporary approaches and educational achievements, there first needs to be an understanding of one's history in the matter. After all through history we can map and look forward to future events. This sentiment holds true for Christian educators who seek not to conform to the world. There is

power with understanding the history of Christian education, and without that basic understanding one is left to wonder.

**Smith, David I., Joonyong Um, and Claudia D. Beversluis. 2014. "The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in A Christian Context." *Christian Higher Education* 13, no.1:74-87. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed October 5, 2017).**

Smith and associates evaluated over nine thousand articles across 14 disciplines to examine the degree to which Christian scholarship has responded to the rise of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL). SOTL is a growing movement in higher education that takes into consideration how the faculty develops as a professional and how they can better teach students. Utilizing the SOTL model many scholarly journals came into existence that focused on Christian scholarship. Unfortunately unlike other disciplines of study, education including Christian education there is no requirement for publication therefore making peer reviewed articles difficult to find. This article further went on to describe opportunities for future practices that will improve on Christian higher education. By incorporating a holistic approach to the lives and development of faculty the entire university would benefit in a positive way.

**Whittle, Sean. 2014. "Some Theological Reservations Surrounding One Contemporary Christian Approach to Teaching and Learning." *Journal Of Education & Christian Belief* 18, no. 2: 191-205. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed September 14, 2017).**

Sean Whittle's article raised a number of theological reservations about one contemporary Christian approach to teaching and learning. The approach of David Smith and Trevor Cooling were the leading approach to theological and Christian beliefs that were integrated in the classroom. Unfortunately, despite the good works of this contemporary approach there are deficits with this method. History has shown there is a positive relationship between Christianity and the provisions of education. However the motivation for wanting to educate an individual is

different between Christian belief (theology) and educational theory and practice. The positive relationship existed so long that some may believe that theology and education is synonymous, however that is not the case. This article illustrates different ways in which the theological concept of vocation can be blended into various parts of the curriculum, from physical education to mathematics. The constant battle between Christian theology and education has been whether Christian belief is appropriate for curriculum development or opportunistic attempts to bolt on Christian beliefs. By approaching a systematic incorporation of Christian belief into various subjects yielded positive results. This approach did not seem overbearing, but it did provoke concerns about the way in which theology was being blended into the educational curriculum. However due to the definition of theology the blending of theology and education is seen more positive.

### **Research Objective**

During this course learners are tasked with selecting a topic that they will conduct research and delve deeper to gain a better understanding of research techniques and approaches. The topic of this proposal for this learner to research is contemporary approaches and practices of Christian Education. Christian education is the foundation for which we are Christian's base all that we know about God. Without educating oneself and others in the practices, teaching and Word of God there would not be a furtherance of one's knowledge, and the kingdom of God. By examining the contemporary approaches to religious education learners will be able to understand the importance of Christian education in the community.<sup>2</sup> Christian education not

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<sup>2</sup> Whittle, Sean. 2014. "Some Theological Reservations Surrounding One Contemporary Christian Approach to Teaching and Learning." *Journal Of Education & Christian Belief* 18, no. 2: 191-205. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed September 14, 2017).

only impacts western civilization, but eastern nations such as China also have standards and practices when it comes to Christian education. According to researchers, Christian education in China has predominantly been missionary however Christian education impacts the individual and society as a whole.<sup>3</sup> Education is one of the fundamental aspects of any society. Now to include your beliefs and religious training to educational development there is an appreciation and further development of the individual and community as a whole.<sup>4</sup> By examining the contemporary approaches to religious education learners will be able to appreciate educational endeavors in a biblical sense. This proposal seeks to understand the contemporary approaches and practices of Christian education. Further research can only enhance learners understanding and awareness of the importance of Christian education not only in their own backyard, but also throughout the world.

### **History of Christian Education**

In order to understand the various approaches to Christian education there first needs to be an understanding of the history behind Christian education. In this section of the research proposal there will be a discussion of where Christian education began, and how it impacted the nations where Christian education was implemented. Setran reflected on the history of Christian education and the importance of understand history and how it impacts the future in regards to this field.<sup>5</sup> History allows us to know and appreciate where one has come from. Christian education has a rich history in missionary work in many nations across the globe. Understanding

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<sup>3</sup> Peter Tze Ming, Ng. 2002. "CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION IN CONTEMPORARY CHINA." *Christian Higher Education* 1, no. 1: 55. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed September 14, 2017).

<sup>4</sup>Pillay, Gerald J. 2015. "'Higher' Education: A Perspective from a Christian University Foundation in Contemporary England." *Christian Higher Education* 14, no. 1/2: 4-16. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed September 14, 2017).

<sup>5</sup>Setran, David. 2014. "Guest Editorial "History Matters". Reflections on Studying the History of Christian Education." *Christian Education Journal*, Fall2014. 294. *Supplemental Index*, EBSCOhost (accessed October 5, 2017)

the history of Christian education on global scale will allow for a better understanding of the modern day approach to Christian education in the same nations. The history of China and Christian education was one filled with conflict and misunderstanding.<sup>6</sup> However that history that plagued China did not interfere with Christian higher education standards and the ability to connect culture and faith. This section of the assignment will delve deeper into the history of eastern and western society in terms of Christian higher education. England has a rich history lathered with religious upheavals and movements of the Church. However that did not stop the educational endeavors of the Church in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>7</sup> History leads to the future and the contemporary approaches to Christian education.

### **Contemporary Approach to Christian Education**

Within this research proposal the examination of contemporary approaches to Christian education will be evaluated. In this particular section of the paper reviews some contemporary approaches, such as advancement in technology, the method in which faculty is evaluated and supported and the new approach to working with students to become well rounded individuals.<sup>8</sup> By studying the contemporary approaches to Christian education readers will be able to utilize this knowledge to their own educational endeavors while building upon the next generation to take the lead. The contemporary approaches in this research proposal will not only be examined within the United States, but also overseas in nations like China and England. Each approach to Christian education within each nation is similar in the advancement of technology, and the

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<sup>6</sup> Peter Tze Ming, Ng. 2002. "CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION IN CONTEMPORARY CHINA." *Christian Higher Education* 1, no. 1: 55. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed September 14, 2017).

<sup>7</sup>Pillay, Gerald J. 2015. "'Higher' Education: A Perspective from a Christian University Foundation in Contemporary England." *Christian Higher Education* 14, no. 1/2: 4-16. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed September 14, 2017).

<sup>8</sup> Hulme, E. Eileen, David E. Groom, and Joseph M. Heltzel. "Reimaging Christian Higher Education." *Christian Higher Education* 15, no.1/2 (January 2016): 95-105. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed October 5, 2017).

connection of faculty and student population. China and England both have a rich history in Christian education, so to examine their modern approach to Christian education will be beneficial to educators and students alike. Now we look at practices employed in contemporary Christian education.

### **Practices in Christian Education**

Practices employed within the United States, China and England in the realm of Christian higher education are modern and innovative. Practices include improving faculty knowledge base and how they interact with students, focusing on the whole development of the individual, and applying new technologies to the advancement of the college.<sup>9</sup> This section of the proposal will examine in detail the new technologies implemented in Christian education, that is leading to the advancement of Christ and education of the masses. This part of the paper will also focus on the practices utilized to make the faculty up to date as well as the students in the modern age. Allowing the focus not to only be on past dealing with culture, but focusing on God will allow the institutions to share the Word in new venues.

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<sup>9</sup> Hulme, E. Eileen, David E. Groom, and Joseph M. Heltzel. "Reimagining Christian Higher Education." *Christian Higher Education* 15, no.1/2 (January 2016): 95-105. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed October 5, 2017).

## Conclusion

Contemporary approaches and practices in education is one that is vital to those working in field of education, and those who are believers in Christ. As a student attending a Christian University the scholarship and teachings applied by the contemporary approaches and practices employed by Christian higher education institutions is very important. In order to not fall behind the secular universities Christian institutions need to have updated curriculums, advance technology, and faculty willing to adapt to the changing time.<sup>10</sup> After all for the contemporary approaches and practices to be implemented will benefit the student body, faculty and university as a whole. Advancement in technology will allow the Christian educators to step into the modern age and reach a new generation beyond the brick and mortar building. Technology is innovative and coupled with faculty innovations Christian education has taken a new turn in the modern world.<sup>11</sup> This learner observed that when first attending Beulah Heights University as an undergraduate, and now as a Graduate student things have changed within the Christian University. Some things have changed for the better in terms of technology and online course, and yet some course have remained as the traditional brick and Mortar University. Christian education must adapt to the contemporary age or it runs the risk of missing out on educating the next generation.

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<sup>10</sup> Smith, David I., Joonyong Um, and Claudia D. Beversluis. 2014. "The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in A Christian Context." *Christian Higher Education* 13, no.1:74-87. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed October 5, 2017).

<sup>11</sup> Hulme, E. Eileen, David E. Groom, and Joseph M. Heltzel. "Reimagining Christian Higher Education." *Christian Higher Education* 15, no.1/2 (January 2016): 95-105. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed October 5, 2017).

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