Faith Learning Integration and Interdisciplinary Studies

Sherry Camp

Omega Graduate School

Date (March 9, 2024)

Professor

Dr. David Ward

**Sherry, this was excellent work on your essay for PHI 805-22! Your topic and thesis relate to the essential elements of the course, and you tailored the paper to your own interests. You had strong scholarly sources (up-to-date and from peer-reviewed journals) to support your position. You made a strong and coherent argument. Keep working on APA style, including how you format your citations (Author, Year, p. 123) and your References page (see my detailed corrections in the attached feedback). Overall, I was quite thrilled with your worksheet for PHI 805-22 and look forward to seeing you if you defvelop it moving toward your Action Research Project, Sherry! Feel free to contact me with any questions! -- Prof. David Ward**

**Grade: A**

***Assignment #3 – Essay***

1. Write a 5-page paper based on the following:
   1. From the **Course Resources** tab in DIAL for SR 805, download the (a)

Interdisciplinary Faith-Learning Research Worksheet, and (b) Tips for answering the questions for each of the seven steps of the interdisciplinarity learning process.

* 1. Review (a), and (b). **Complete the worksheet** including the top section, providing submission date, your name, educational background, social profession, and other pertinent information (e.g., I have worked/been involved with/influenced by....)
  2. Answer the questions for the seven steps of the OGS Interdisciplinary Faith- Learning Research Worksheet.
  3. Document all sources in APA style, 7th edition for in-text citations and for Work Cited. Include page numbers.
  4. Include a separate **Works Cited** page, formatted according to APA style, 7th edition.

1. Submit through **DIAL** to the professor.

**Appendix 4A: Faith-Learning Integration Worksheet**

Date: March 9, 2023

Name of Scholar-Practitioner: Sherry Camp

Educational Background: BA Psychology/Elementary Ed; M.Litt; DSL (in process).

Social Profession: Middle School Principal

Other Pertinent Information: 35 years in education: public, private, home school.

**STEP 1: OBSERVATIONS RAISING THE NEED FOR INQUIRY**

What is the subject/problem that prompts the need to integrate faith and learning and do Christian interdisciplinary research?

The subject of school choice and state voucher programs which allow parents and families to participate in schools of their choice is of great interest to me. Many questions arise in my mind about this program which is now reaching close to 26 states in the USA. Although it is a wonderful program for those who appreciate religious freedoms from America’s government schools, and those of minorities who cannot afford private schooling, what is going to be the long term effect on families, even of diverse and low economic status when their state does not offer this program? There is a need to research this subject from a biblical worldview and to decide if this privilege for now should be an integral part of all families and their choice of education for their children in every state. Why are not all states allowing this choice for the people, and does this interfere with our religious freedoms?

The topic of interest to me particularly for this course is one that is pertinent to my career as an administrator in a private Christian school. The school in which I am middle school principal is in the state of Indiana where we are privileged to be participants of the state voucher program that makes school choice affordable, and we do accept families on the voucher program at our school. Thus, the need to establish advantages and disadvantages for the school in which I work is pertinent.

Both religious and academic research must be proclaimed for truth of the future of our private Christian school concerning voucher programs. Faith integration and interdisciplinary research is necessary to impact society for the sake of the Gospel of Christ, historically, culturally, sociologically, psychologically, and political forces, both past and present must be studied to thoroughly apply Christian worldview, as trends are analyzed, integrated with biblical truths, communicated, and textualized to continue new research and life-long learning (Ward, 2024).

“Christian interdisciplinary research arises when the researcher’s response to God’s calling in any of the spheres of life that scripture addresses: family, religious, government work or culture should lead to truth, not bias,” (Ward, 2014, p. 34). The topic of state funded school vouchers and school choice is pertinent to these spheres of life mentioned above. To make a change in the world as a biblical worldview Christ follower and a scholar practioner, I must know the truth in this area and communicate it in a winsome way to others.

**STEP 2: LITERATURE REVIEW- HERMENEUTICAL INQUIRY OF NATURAL/SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES/HISTORICAL TRADITIONS**

What are the different perspectives on the subject/problem from the relevant contemporary natural or social science disciplines as well as cultural trends and ideas?

Identifying various readings relevant to my inquiry on school choice and state voucher programs has been interesting and varied. Religious freedom was an early historical concern in schools and many churches founded Christian schools in America. However, private education in the first colonies of America came before public education. Many schools were first founded by the church. “…public school systems were largely the product of American Protestants who drew on the model of locally supported schooling established in Puritan New England and believed that effective education could never be severed from religious instruction,” (Gross, 2021). But were all children allowed to participate?

In some cases, parents did choose religious schooling from private religious schools for their children, but some did not. A recent study by Dr. Joshua Reichard of Omega Graduate School found: “Parents receive the voucher subsidy directly from the state and choose where to direct it on behalf of their children. The intention of such programs is to expand the range of possible schooling opportunities for parents, especially for those whose public schools are underperforming,” (Reichard (2012). This voucher and choice program was to encourage parents that they have a variety of choices for their children and do not have to have public schooling if it is not best for the child’s success.

School options have not changed, but more “types” of schools are now considered private schools: boarding schools, classical schools, military schools, religious schools, special needs schools, same sex schools, home schools, to name a few. Parents who desire a particular type of education have a wide variety of options available to them. 80% of American children are educated in the public system. The other 20% find what their parents are looking for in a private school, (Kennedy, 2021).

In America’s public school systems in the late 1950’s, classrooms had prayer and devotions every morning as school began and some religious instruction was allowed. Teachers at this point knew this would be an expectation at school. As more and more religious beliefs other than Christianity were known and proclaimed in these schools, influential voices were heard. Eventually in 1962, the US Supreme Court ruled that Christian prayer was no longer accepted at schools. At this point, however, afterschool or before school Christian clubs and organizations, even athletic events continue to have prayer as part of their festivities.

Standardized testing was administered in public schools and many students were not fairing as well as others, and education departments across the country were concerned that all students were being taught well and had equal opportunity to learn the same as others. Upon the late 1980’s Standards based curriculum and “No Child Left Behind” era, the government began to have more hands-on initiatives in public school for all children’s best success. The “narrative of failing schools — students being out-competed internationally and declining educational standards — persists, and has become an entrenched part of the debate over education in the U.S.,” (Kamenetz, 2018).

Many families were concerned their children were receiving the best instruction when some of the parents reviewed the common core curriculum. It was very different from how they were taught, and they were uncomfortable with not being able to help their child at home. Other worldviews taught from teachers and education curriculum became the norm in public schools. Parents were not in agreement with teaching their children what they would not want them taught in a public school. At this point they believed their child’s special needs and abilities would better be served in a private school for their best success. Most private schooling does have parent partnerships.

Now, since 2020 and the previous Covid 19 Pandemic, more private schools are filling because of students’ loss of academics as they were quarantined, and the world was in a catastrophic lockdown. Although US citizens were paying educational taxes to the government, many felt it was time for the government to allow parents to have choice of where to send their children for the best education. Parents may become more involved in their children’s education as they move their children from public to private schools and opt to communicate with teachers for their child’s success, as well as participate in school activities, volunteer in classrooms, and help their kids with homework and learn to use online educational resources (Hussein, 2022).

The state voucher program does allow for school choice and is useful for both the

families and the private schools, if they do not grow dependent on it and can be used for parents and schools as a means of achieving social justice by giving an equal opportunity to low-income students to join private schools as well as their peers from wealthy families, (Hussein, 2022). This is also a viable reason to be thankful for state funds.

The problem now is many parents want to make use of vouchers and private

schools are filling up quickly. Is this going to be fair to all families who are now on a waiting list and may not get in? Some families are enrolling into multiple private schools and waiting to see where they will be accepted. Accountability is needed for private schools and their acceptance policies. Will private schools keep to their mission statements and goals? What about diverse groups and internationals where there is a language barrier? Are private Christian schools able to serve them with the proper certifications?

Americans already are highly stratified by race, income and myriad other factors according to where they live and hence, what public school they attend. Moreover, what research exists (more is needed), suggests that choice, not compulsion, holds the greatest potential, at least in education to bridge the divides,” (McCluskey & DeAngelis, 2020). Will Christian private schools accept the challenge while keeping to their value statements of the faith?

Hence, “Hermeneutical inquiry will require critical thinking and understanding the quality of researched information and the importance of understanding various perspectives on a topic is vital to the process of interdisciplinary faith learning integration, (Ward, 2014). Is it even realistic to believe Christians should and could reclaim the public school system?

**STEP 3: FAITH-LEARNING INTEGRATION INQUIRY WITH CHRISTIAN AND SCIENTIFIC SOURCES**

How does Scripture speak to this issue?

“There is a need to connect worldview insights with other sources of knowledge to develop a faith-informed understanding any research question or problem of inquiry,” (Ward 2014, p. 41). New learning must be studied and communicated with others for real understanding. The What? So what? Now What? Method is a good one for inquiry. Expounding on why and how and asking deeper questions are methods that are modeled by Jesus Christ as He walked on the earth going about His Father’s business teaching and preaching the good news.

In the Old Testament, parents were the main teachers of their children and were commanded to teach them and write scriptures on the “door posts of your house and on your gates,” (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). They were to train their children in the “way they should go, and when they are old, they would not depart from the teaching,” (Proverbs 22:6). From a biblical worldview, this is the first of most important teachings to children.

In the New Testament, Ephesians 6:1-4, states that children should obey their parents, honor them and things will go well with them. Fathers should not provoke them to wrath but bring them up in the discipline, nurture, admonish, instruction, training of the Lord. This would be an example of parents who train and then partner with private schools of their choice to continue what they have started for their child’s best religious teaching.

Further, “Pure and undefiled religion before God and our Father is this, to look after, to take care of, to visit orphans and the fatherless…” (James 1:27).

Under the New Covenant, the content of the training changes from Law to grace, because of the finished work of Christ. We are also church-based, now. The church can be a part of the Lord’s provision of the education of children. In modern times, the biggest changes are evident which are the result of moving away from the Bible as the primary view. It was taught in schools and in subjects.

Psalms 78:6 exhorts to teach so that the next generations will know and arise and tell them to their children. They would not be like their ancestors who were not loyal to God.

Matthew 28: 18-20, says, go into all the world and make disciples of all nations…teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. Does this not apply to the nations who have come here to America? How can we help educate and influence those ones who have never had the chance to hear about Jesus and His finished work if we do not do so in private Christian schools?

What about those who have been here all along and been misunderstood or forgotten? How about those who are victims of racial misunderstanding? Has not their education been stifled? Dr. Reichard of Omega Graduate School believes that “future research should explore issues such as correlation between student religiosity and racial understanding, the impact of school choice programs on the racial composition of religious private schools, and the extent to which racial integration in religious private schools fosters improved academic achievement in underperforming public school districts,” (Reichard 2014). This is a most important area of research.

In this post-modernistic age, many have become complacent and disengaged in the culture in which we live and are self-centered only interested in what they desire. Can we engage our society today and take back our public school systems as a country for the sake of the Gospel? Is it too late?

**STEP 4: SYNTHESIZED INTERDISCIPLINARY FORMULATION (WITH SOCIAL RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS)**

What is the subject/problem that prompts the need to do Christian interdisciplinary research?

My research problem: The school choice program through state vouchers is needed for students to attend and be educated from a biblical worldview in private Christian schools, no matter the student’s diversity or economic status. There must be more private Christian schools to accommodate these children.

My Research Hypothesis: The need and opportunity for more private Christian schools is greater than ever before to grow and accommodate children of all diversities and economic status through school choice vouchers to teach academics through a biblical worldview.

Significance: The research above would make people aware and understand the biblical worldview on this issue and choose to send their children to private Christian schools. Love of learning in every academic subject lead to the desire to know and experience God, which is the thinking God’s thoughts after Him.

**STEP 5: CRITICAL (APOLOGETIC) AND CONTEXTUAL COMMUNICATION**

What critical reasons (apologetic) can you give for why your interdisciplinary Christian perspective should be accepted?

It is imperative to be a good communicator and a continuing scholar practioner to change the world for “human flourishing and redemptive action. This requires leadership for ethical and social application,” (Ward, 2014). Being a winsome educator and proclaimer of truth to win some of the ones in opposition to private Christian education is a daunting task, but necessary!

Knowing how to engage others and win opportunities to speak with them on public school boards may be most challenging. But I believe it can be done in smaller groups such as community services: Rotary Clubs, Chamber of Commerce, Community Foundations, American Legions, regional Health Centers, and churches to name a few. People do not know what they have not heard. Being able to give the “what, why, and now what can be done,” for our children’s education success can be a start.

While others may say this may not be accepted, it is too Christianly, you need to separate church and state, I believe it is in the “how” it is proclaimed. I am not naive to believe others will not agree on this subject. They are striving to keep government schools open, but all need to have choice to learn where it is best for them. Through relationships, one on one, small groups, and much time, this can be proclaimed.

As I continue to research and talk with others, and make relationship with them, change will be small. I think of many missionaries who went to foreign countries and for years had no fruit of their labors, but they did not quit. It was a slow process. All families need to know they have choices for their children’s education that goes along with their beliefs and worldviews. States need to be alerted that it is a parents’ rights to do what is best for their children and should allow school choice by having voucher programs.

There may be some states who do not want to provide school choice vouchers and will only support public education. There may be schools who do not want other families with other beliefs in their schools. Others may not want religion taught to their children. I would argue that many families today do not know or care what is taught to their children. This may be a great problem that the church today should be teaching. The church needs to understand their influence to engage their parishioners on this subject. But they may not know either? Who will inform them? Who will help them understand?

By researching, interviewing others of all economic backgrounds and diversities, I could make this topic more persuasive and engage more conversation for understanding.

**STEP 6: ETHICAL & SOCIAL ORTHOPRAXIS (i.e. LEADERSHIP ACTIONS)**

What practical implications does your interdisciplinary Christian perspective have for your orthopraxis or leadership for world change?

I need to make relationships with others of like minds and those who do not agree with school choice voucher programs, as well. I need to find them and engage in conversation with them. I also will continue to research this topic from all states in the US, their pros and cons.

This will take time and energy as I make it a priority in my conversations with others at my school. As a mom of 5 adult children and 14 grandchildren, it is a privilege to talk with them about education. One of our adult children homeschools their children this year, after being a part of a failing charter school last year. The other families chose to send their children to public school and they are a vital part of the school, where parents are still allowed to volunteer. But how long will this last?

Church life is important as the leaders of the church need to know what they should believe about children’s education. One member of our school board is the pastor where we attend. He and I have had much conversation about the topic. Researching other states where school choice and voucher programs are not allowed is a must for me. I know one of our Indiana State senators who is on the Education Committee in the Senate. I’ve had good conversations with him, and his children attend our schools. But I need to know why other states do not have voucher programs, talk with their legislators and community leaders, and ask questions. This will all take time, important time, but it is necessary.

Gaining the opportunity to talk with diverse groups and developing relationships with them is the start of good meaningful conversation. This is practical theology application and I believe it is core to what we believe, why we believe it, and why it is important to know!  
**STEP 7: REFLECTIVE EVALUATION**

How well did the research satisfy the original need for inquiry? Were there aspects of the problem left unanswered in the research design?

The research done only showed me that there is much more research to do! I am only beginning. It looks overwhelming, however, but not discouraging. I want to learn much more about the history of worldwide education and religious freedoms. The direction in which I started is so general and I want to narrow it more, as there is much I learned in such a little time.

I care deeply about children’s education and their relationships with their families and school as they develop into all that God desires for their best. I will need to better narrow my topic. I do believe many do not understand school choice in America. I would love to be a leader of courage and knowledge in this area and spread truth of God as I communicate. It would be so exciting to be a part of a new “third great awakening” where a network of new institutions was created to change the world for the sake of Christ! (Ward 2014). Can this be done in private Christian schooling with school choice voucher programs? I believe so.

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