

What Are We Educating People For?

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I have spent much of my professional life pendulating between academia and business. I taught students, worked with entrepreneurs and executives, built businesses, and experienced technology reshape entire industries.

In both scenarios, we spend significant time planning for the future. What skills will our students need? What jobs will disappear? What opportunities will emerge? Where should we invest our time and money? Recently, will artificial intelligence render us obsolete?

These are important questions; however, the more I am experiencing business and technology, the more I am asking myself: *What are we educating people for?*

Competence is not enough

Historically, education has been correlated to competence. We teach students and executives the skills they need to perform their jobs well. We train doctors to practice medicine, managers to administer people and organizations, theologians to interpret Scriptures, engineers to build, and entrepreneurs to innovate. I believe competence matters; knowledge and excellence are important, but they are not enough.

Unfortunately, we have traditionally perceived ethics, entrepreneurship, and technology, as separate, sometimes adversarial subjects. In the new geopolitical context, which technology has brought onto us, it's imperative to include them in the same conversation.

Entrepreneurship is about progress and wealth creation, often built on newly invented technologies. According to some scholars, artificial intelligence (AI) is probably the greatest agent of creative destruction of our generation. But neither entrepreneurship nor technology can tell us whether what we create is **good**.

Technology tells us what is possible, business models tell us if it's profitable. Data tell us if it's efficient, but none of these, will tell us if it's worth pursuing! That requires judgment and discernment. It requires virtue, character, responsibility, wisdom, and the willingness to consider the human side of every business model, algorithm, or innovation. The more powerful our technological tools become, the more consequential the human questions will be.

Information vs. formation

This is where I believe Christian education has a unique and distinctive contribution. Paul writes to the Romans “*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, so that we may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.*”

The language here is striking. The Scripture is concerned with the mind, but not only with the accumulation of information. The renewed mind is capable of **discernment**. It can distinguish between good and evil. That distinction between information and formation may be the most important contribution educators can offer in the age of artificial intelligence (AI).

If education is exclusively the transfer of information, we may be entering an unwinnable competition. Machines can already retrieve, summarize, organize, translate, and generate information at a speed surpassing most humans. And their capabilities will only improve.

But Christian education has never been only about the transfer of information. We are also in the business of forming people. So, the question “*what skills will the future require?*” must be augmented by the question “*what kind of people will the future require?*” The future needs professionals competent in using technological tools, but more importantly, individuals who know **when** to use them. We need entrepreneurs who will not only ask “*can we build this?*” but also “*should we build this?*” Financiers who will not evaluate success exclusively on financial terms but also consider the environment and the people’s well-being. Business and technology alone can not answer these questions for us, because they are human questions, moral questions, and ultimately theological questions.

The golden hour of Christian educators

Our responsibility is not only to prepare young people to adapt to the next technological disruption. **We must prepare them to lead through it.** Christian educators can create a space where theology and ethics engage with business and technology. These conversations should not be at the margins; they need to be front and center.

Technology is transforming how people work, communicate, learn, create, exercise influence, and understand themselves. Therefore, the Christian message needs to be intertwined with the technological revolution. As Christians, we believe humans are valuable not because of their productivity, efficiency, intelligence, or economic usefulness. Humans have intrinsic value because they are created in the image of God. Our work matters, but our worth is not measured only by our economic output. Our knowledge gives us possibilities, but it also gives us responsibility.

The Savior's question is remarkably relevant in our technological age: "*For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?*" Our generation may be able to build things previous generations could only imagine. But increased capability does not guarantee increased wisdom. Unless Christians step up and articulate our beliefs, we risk having the power to transform the world, but remain uncertain about the kind of world we want to live in. That is why formation matters.

Character will never be obsolete

Technology will become better and faster. Skills we consider valuable today may change or disappear altogether. New professions will emerge, while others will be transformed beyond recognition. But **integrity** will never be obsolete. Neither will be **wisdom, courage, generosity, discernment, humility, responsibility, or care** for another human being. This is where we as Christian educators must resist the temptation to chase every new development, as though our task were simply to keep students one step ahead of technological change.

We may not know which technical skill they will need for the future, but we can form people committed to continuous learning, humble enough to recognize that they will need additional schooling in the future. We can form people who will exercise judgment and practice accountability. We can teach them to seize opportunities without neglecting people. We can encourage ambition while teaching stewardship. We can cultivate excellence without allowing achievement to become our idols. And we can remind future generation that knowledge and accomplishments are not selfish possessions, but rather gifts from God for the good of others.

So, what are we educating people for?

Not merely for the jobs of today, but for the jobs of tomorrow; not simply to master new technologies, build successful organizations, or remain competitive. We are educating people to become wise stewards of the knowledge, creativity, influence, opportunity, and technology God has placed in our stewardship. Our greatest responsibility is to invest generously in the people who will inherit what we build. Tools and technology will change, but our calling to love God and neighbor will not. The educational challenge in the age of artificial intelligence (AI) is not keeping up with the machines. It is **forming humans** with the wisdom, character, and discernment to decide what to do with the awesome power those machines have placed in our hands.