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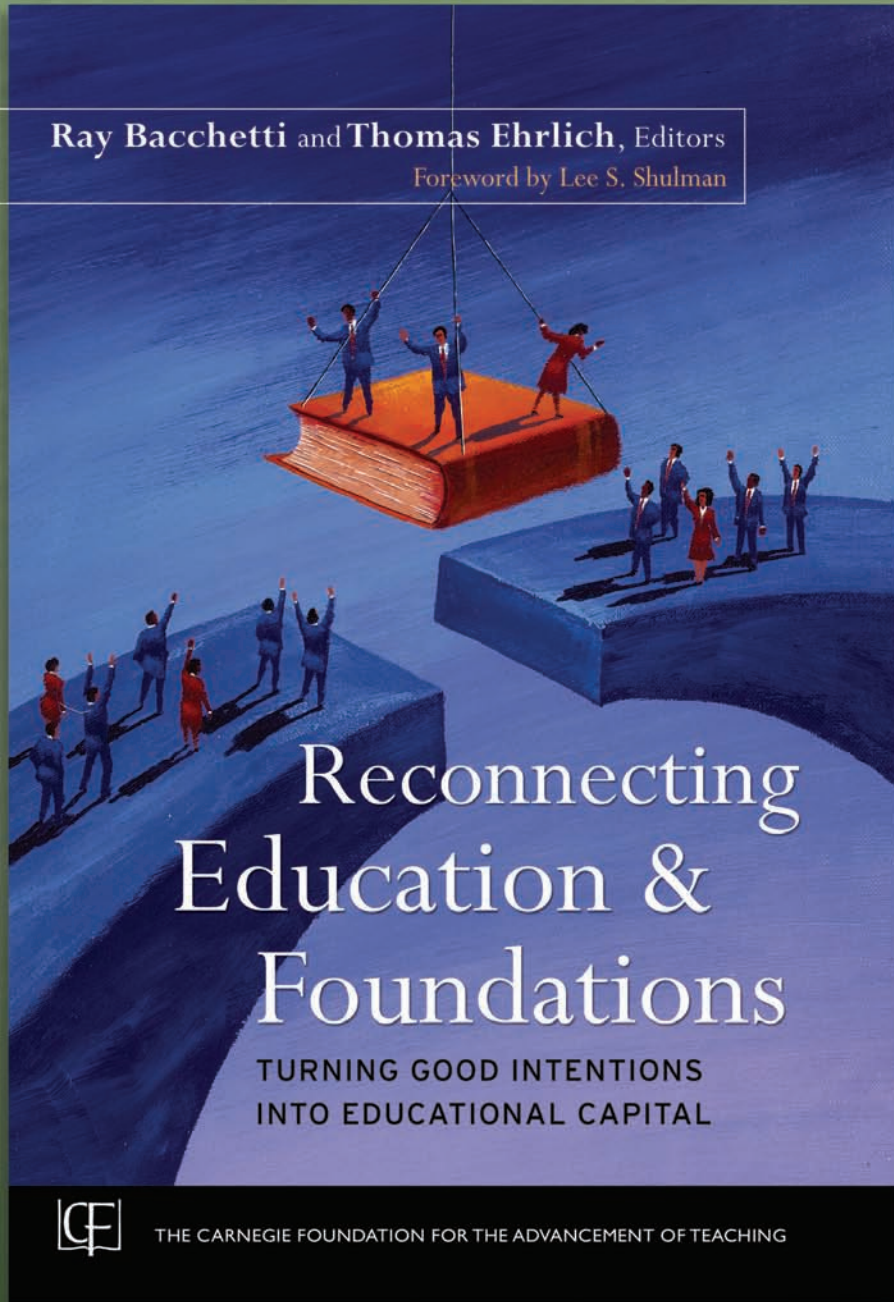
Ray Bacchetti and Thomas Ehrlich, Editors

Foreword by Lee S. Shulman

Reconnecting
Education &
Foundations

TURNING GOOD INTENTIONS
INTO EDUCATIONAL CAPITAL

CF THE CARNEGIE FOUNDATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF TEACHING

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS
AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Reconnecting Education and Foundations

Turning Good Intentions into Educational Capital

In early January 2004, in connection with its centennial, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching began a 30-month appraisal of relations between influential philanthropic foundations and educational institutions (both K–12 and higher education) with the goal of strengthening those relations.

The co-directors of the project and editors of the book based on the project are **RAY BACCHETTI**, a scholar-in-residence at Carnegie and former Hewlett Foundation education program officer and Stanford University vice president, and **THOMAS EHRLICH**, a senior scholar at the Carnegie Foundation and former president of Indiana University, provost of the University of Pennsylvania and dean of the Stanford Law School.

The project's advisory council members are:

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President, Council for Aid to Education

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The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the view of these institutions or their employees.

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**RECONNECTING EDUCATION
AND FOUNDATIONS**

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Introduction

The culture of foundations in America began early in the 20th century with the generosity of Andrew Carnegie and a small band of other philanthropists. They chose foundations as a means to organize their philanthropy. These philanthropists saw education—in both K–12 schools and in colleges and universities—as a worthy object of their support, in large measure because education gave individuals opportunities to be successful if they were willing to work hard. They believed in the "teach a person to fish" strategy of charitable giving, and educational institutions were the prime vehicles.

Foundations have been powerful engines in promoting and supporting innovation and excellence in education from kindergarten through graduate education and in research across many fields. In the early years of the 21st century, however, a number of foundations appeared to grow weary of support for education and more hesitant about the assumption that educational institutions can deliver on their promise of leveraging philanthropic funding into individual and societal progress.

In January 2004, in connection with its centennial, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, through a project directed by Scholar-in-Residence Ray Bacchetti and Senior Scholar Thomas Ehrlich, began a 30-month appraisal of the relations of the more influential philanthropic foundations and educational institutions (both K–12 and higher education) with the goal of improving the ways foundations and educational institutions can work together. The aim of the project was to answer questions like these: How can relations between and among institutions of education and foundations be more powerful, focused and consequential in the years ahead? What lessons can be learned from the past and applied to the future? Additionally, Ehrlich and Bacchetti wanted to make a set of recommendations, along with persuasive evidence on which those recommendations would be based. They wanted to generate ideas as well as to provide information, provoking and promoting constructive dialogue in which the Carnegie Foundation and others would play continuing roles.

What foundation and education leaders are saying

Bacchetti and Ehrlich began the project by interviewing approximately three dozen leaders who had worked with and/or for foundations and educational institutions. Some of them were involved primarily in K–12 education or in higher education, some in foundation programming and leadership, and some in both spheres. Carnegie colleagues and its Board of Trustees were also invited to review and contribute. The overwhelming response was that relations between foundations and educational institutions were seriously frayed, and in some places they were in tatters. Although the leaders interviewed had many good things to say about higher education's contributions, the struggles in K–12 education, and the education community's necessary

dependence on foundations for R&D support, they were more than grumpy about the ways those in the other realm operated and about their perceptions that the needs and interests of their own sphere were not adequately considered by those in the other sphere.

The following are a few of the comments from the interviews.

What Foundation Leaders Say About Higher Education

- Colleges and universities are self-contained with little concern about the social issues around them.
- Higher education looks and acts unaccountable.
- Campuses want to set their own agendas and then expect foundations to support them.
- Elite schools feel little need to change.
- There are some 3,550 colleges and universities in the country, and the leverage from a grant to one of them simply was too small.
- In spite of advances in learning about learning, undergraduates still find the lecture the primary mode of teaching.
- Schools of education are neither respected, nor deserve respect or funding on some campuses.

What Foundation Leaders Say About K–12 Education

- Foundations have invested a lot in K–12 schools without much return.
- Policy issues such as school reform and testing have become both more difficult and messier.
- There is little chance of systemic change in K–12 education. Scaling up successful innovations seems impossible.
- The issues are so large that foundations need to partner with other foundations to have real impact, but they rarely do that well.
- K–12 schools have become so insular that they are not interested in foundation support for systemic change.
- School change is on everyone's agenda, so many foundations feel they might not be needed.

What Education Leaders Say About Foundations

- Foundations "make lousy lovers" because they abandon things in their hurry for fast results.
- Most foundations talk a lot about collaboration but rarely do or support much of it.
- Foundations are overly focused on measurable outcomes in particular and on business models in general.
- Foundations want innovation, but often do not have the expertise to identify promising ideas and, when they do, are not prepared to undertake the risk that they might fail.
- Many in foundations have little experience with organizational strategy in educational institutions.
- Foundations, with little knowledge of education, tend to "reinvent the wheel every time."
- Foundation decision-making is opaque; there is a lack of accountability, except to boards.

Common Concerns

Leaders on both sides observed that it is difficult to be honest in foundation–education relations. There exists an unspoken collusion, "a mating dance," when schools, colleges and universities seek foundation support and when foundations turn to them to carry out the ambitious agendas they develop. Both sides want to look good. Educational institutions and their leaders promise far more than they can deliver. Foundations recognize the hyperbole and go along believing that their grant will make the difference. As one former foundation president sardonically put it, "all our geese are swans." At a grant's end, it often happens that positives are accentuated, shortcomings are rationalized, and the parties praise each other. Both sides, at some level, understand this charade, but they play along because it seems in their parochial interests, though not necessarily the public interest, to do so. In the business of doing good, the chief occupational hazard involves foundations over–expecting, grant–seekers over–promising, and, in the end, both sides over–claiming.

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At the same time, along with their frustrations, the leaders interviewed expressed a real longing for efforts that would bridge the gaps between foundations and institutions of education without losing the qualities that are prized in either sector. They were eager to consider avenues that would build on successes and learn from them, while recognizing the differing resources and conditions in which different educational institutions operate.

The Book

Based on their analysis and findings, Bacchetti and Ehrlich designed their book to reach a broad audience of those interested in foundations and education. They solicited essays from leading scholars and practitioners that examine the history of relations between foundations and education, the impact of foundation giving on education in both K–12 and higher education, and the disparate cultures in those realms. In addition, they sought cogent case studies in both K–12 and higher education to reflect the challenges that are faced and the lessons to be learned in facing those challenges. Finally, they sought essays on two themes that cut across both K–12 and higher education: one on the rise of conservative foundations and one on operating foundations.

Based on the insights gained from these essays, their own experiences, and counsel from a wide range of knowledgeable advisors, Bacchetti and Ehrlich prepared a preliminary set of recommendations on how relations between foundations and institutions of education might be strengthened.

When the recommendations were in draft form, they were circulated along with the other essays in the volume to a group of 50 leaders in education and foundations who were invited to the Carnegie Foundation for a Centennial Conference. Over the course of the conference, the recommendations were critiqued and reshaped. The participants in the Centennial Conference contributed an understanding that sea changes had

occurred in the political, social and economic environments that undergird foundations on the one hand and institutions of education on the other. In the short space of this brochure, the recommendations are necessarily summarized, and the many examples included in the book omitted.

The Recommendations in Brief

The first recommendation, on building educational capital, is the most important. When foundations put this recommendation to work, we can expect more grants that reveal and confirm better and broadly useful educational practices, especially in regard to effectiveness in improving teaching and learning. The five additional recommendations support and reinforce educational capital, while strengthening foundation performance.

RECOMMENDATION 1 **Building Educational Capital**

Are foundations and their grantees building know-how that transcends individual grants and grantees? When they do, can this know-how be put to widespread and strategic use? And the overarching question: How can so scarce a resource as foundation dollars work harder and smarter and have a longer reach in time and across the relevant educational universes? In this search for greater potency in the foundation-education relationship, especially in teaching and learning, the study's principal recommendation is that foundations and educational institutions shape their work together around the building of educational capital, that is, progressive accumulation, in forms useable by educators, of validated experience and knowledge about successful educational ideas and strategies. Educational capital is about the design of foundation-funded projects so

> **EDUCATIONAL CAPITAL IS ABOUT THE DESIGN OF FOUNDATION-FUNDED PROJECTS SO THAT THEY ADD IMPORTANT MATERIAL TO THE STOCK OF AVAILABLE KNOWLEDGE ON WHICH COMPARABLE SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES CAN DRAW.**

that they add important material to the stock of available knowledge on which comparable schools, colleges and universities can draw. Easy to say. Indeed, it sounds like common sense. But if it were as easy to do as to say, the legacy of billions in foundation grants would be more transparent, the cumulative improvement of education more obvious, and the direction of future improvement more clearly discernable. The case studies in the book offer particularly rich examples of the importance of building educational capital. Two chapters, one on K–12 education and one on higher education, also discuss the concept and its implementation in some detail.

To create educational capital, five guiding principles are critical:

• **Ground the project design.** For a project to increase understanding, it must be grounded in and then must build on relevant research and examined experience. Then the effort can knowingly advance rather than unknowingly repeat prior learning about what works. Equally important, knowledge of prior work allows one to steer clear of what's been shown not to work and thus avoids wasted effort and squandered aspirations. Educational advancement is seldom about sweeping change or standing on the shoulders of an

available giant. It is, rather, about the steady, solid work of using relevant prior knowledge to take a next step—to stand on the shoulders of successful predecessors to produce a proven and generalizable increment of professionally potent knowledge.

- **Identify the non-negotiable core.** Future users of an element of educational capital must understand its core concepts—the non-negotiables—and put them into operation with fidelity to the program's design. Fidelity is the price exacted to secure the program's benefits in student learning. No less important, educational capital should be applicable in diverse circumstances. No single approach can engage all students or be right for all contexts. Different student backgrounds and different connections to subject matter need to be used, even as the teaching is true to the program's design.

- **Incorporate means for ensuring staying power.** Education at all levels struggles with change. For an idea to become educational capital, it must take account of the barriers to entry into educators' repertoires. This means providing a road map for its own continuity. At a minimum this will oblige documentation of both the idea and of how it can be put into play: the degree of difficulty, the time needed to realize results, and the costs—in one-time investments and continuing operating budgets—of implementation.

- **Build in appropriate assessment at every stage.** Assessment is an essential condition for creating educational capital. Different assessment methods can be useful in different settings and levels. A project should use the most appropriate research method suitable to the project's character. This includes using both formative and summative methods as rigorously as circumstances allow. As assessment becomes an essential element in the ecology of educational improvement and is increasingly integrated into foundation-education relationships, both foundations and grantees will need to demand more of themselves. The quality of a project's design and the significance of its input must connect, like a plug and a socket, with a demanding evaluation scheme to confirm the worth of the project. This will oblige most practitioners to become familiar with new technical skills and expand their range of ways to interpret evidence of learning.

- **Encourage interconnectedness.** Though the denizens of K–12 and higher education are famously independent, they also operate in local contexts and as members of local organizations. Educational capital must be designed and built in ways that fit into these contexts and organizations, even as it generalizes across them. Looking laterally, a project should reinforce other objectives of the school or college, or at least be consistent with them. Looking vertically, it should be supported by the levels of leadership above and below. A foundation that wants to build educational capital must assure itself that a project is consistent with the norms and practices of the institutions for which it is meant and capable of interconnecting with them effectively. An analogy to weaving is apt.

RECOMMENDATION *2* Openness

There are no accidental tourists in the places where educational capital is built. A high degree of intentionality is required in each stage of foundation grantmaking, from the time that grant criteria begin to be developed to the time when results of grants are reviewed. In the process, the information flow from grant-seekers into foundations is, by definition, ample. The flow in the other direction, however, is fractured, truncated

and often absent altogether. Under these asymmetrical conditions, foundations learn from the philanthropic process and grant-seekers do not. In response, recommendation two states that, insofar as practicable, major foundations maintain an Internet Web site for public review on which are available:

- All proposals they receive for funding.
- Written decisions describing the proposals that are funded and the foundation's rationale for doing so.
- A reasonable sampling of the proposals that are not funded, accompanied by a written explanation characterizing in as specific terms as possible the reasons why those proposals, grouped appropriately, were not funded.

Openness at every stage is a key factor in increasing the likelihood of success in building educational capital. Openness (compared to its opposite—secrecy) makes it more likely that leaders of foundations and educational institutions will understand each other and each other's goals. Openness does not guarantee success, but secrecy greatly increases the odds of failure. This recommendation is about sending information from foundations back to existing and potential grant-seekers, giving them a basis for improving the grant-worthiness of their projects.

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Moreover, by making the flow of information a two-way affair, a genuine dialogue can occur, the field can grow in sophistication, and the quality of proposals and thus the productivity of foundation programs can be improved.

RECOMMENDATION 3 External Review

External review is the sibling of openness in the building of educational capital. Promoting external review refers to nothing more complicated than consciously informing a foundation's decision-making with the views of individuals outside the foundation who can bring experience, wisdom and judgment to the issues involved. Some foundations do good jobs of ensuring that their work is regularly subject to such external review. On the whole, however, the prevailing impression is that most foundations do a poor job in this arena, and confirmation of that judgment was a common theme running through comments the authors heard both from their initial interviews to determine whether to undertake this project and from the participants at the Centennial Conference on Foundations and Education. Accordingly, recommendation three urges that foundations use external reviewers—individuals with relevant experience working in educational institutions—to review each stage of their work. This review can bring a degree of trust, as well as expertise, to the process. External review can bring objectivity and perspective. External reviewers should supplement, not supplant, the judgment of foundation boards, officers and staff.

External reviews, particularly done collaboratively among foundations, will help build a common base of validated knowledge that the foundations can put into the field and on which future grants can be built, increasing educational capital and reducing the scatter of individual projects unconnected to larger bodies of knowledge.

RECOMMENDATION 4 Professional Development

Foundation program officers and presidents are two of a diminishing number of professional positions for which there is no established preparation or identifiable career path. Candidates for these two positions who will be involved in making grants to educational institutions are chosen most often either from one of those institutions—usually an elite university—or from another foundation. The program officer, in particular, is the chief information source to the field about the foundation's interests, strategic objectives and decision-making criteria. He or she is also the foundation's "intake filter." In these two roles, the program officer wields much of the practical power in relationships with grant-seekers. Once hired into a foundation, the individual's responsibility for learning how to be effective is thus based on potential but uncertain resources such as on-the-job training or self-directed learning. To influence educational institutions at any level, from elementary schools to research universities, most observers conclude that the preparation of program officers falls far short of adequacy, let alone excellence.

Because the knowledge of how to build educational capital from a distance through the medium of a foundation grant is a form of professional expertise both uncommon and hard-won, recommendation four stresses the need for a consortium of prominent foundation and educational leaders, working together with an organization like Grantmakers for Education, that will make such knowledge more common by developing a curriculum and delivery methods for introductory training and continuing professional development for program officers in their craft.

The primary purposes of these efforts should be to increase the strategic acuity of program staff and leaders, to ground the aspirations of foundations, and to build strong and productive relationships with educational institutions.

RECOMMENDATION 5 Collaboration

Each educational institution has its own identity and needs, but most share common concerns. Building educational capital means focusing collaboratively on those concerns. It means making investments that are deliberately designed both to benefit from past experience and to provide useful wisdom for future investments. Too often, when foundations invest in a single institution of education, the knowledge resulting from that investment stays closeted within the receiving institution.

A full exploration of collaboration obliges taking three different perspectives seriously. The first focuses on K–12 education, the second on higher education, and the third on K–16 collaborations. As the essays in the book make clear, all three call for consideration of intermediary organizations. When these have expert and trustworthy standing in the field, they can (1) build capacity in grantees to implement and sustain program improvements and (2) advise foundations on how to make increasingly effective grants. They help bridge the deep division in American education between K–12 schooling and higher education that has much to do with how educational institutions developed and little to do with the contemporary educational needs of students or our society. Whenever foundation support is aimed at concerns common across a domain, it is also aimed at building educational capital. Singular investments are far less likely to produce that outcome than those that can pool expertise, experience, money and other resources in collaborative ventures. Recommendation five,

therefore, counsels that investment in collaborations be increased along with developing practical knowledge of how to manage such collaborations for maximum benefit for the objectives sought. These collaborations should be among foundations; among schools, colleges and universities; with intermediary organizations; and in coalitions linking members of relevant groups.

RECOMMENDATION 6 **Putting Educational Capital to Work**

When one has developed educational capital, how does it get put to work wisely, well and over a broad sphere? Questions about the dissemination and use of good ideas in education have cycled up and down the reform priority list for a long time. Answers as good as the best of the practice-improving ideas, however, have been hard to find. Many of those answers have dealt with scaling up—or some version of it. Their lack of success can be ascribed to the short attention spans in the field and in foundations, local differences that scrambled the logic of the imported reforms, approach-avoidance and passive-aggressive responses from potential users, and similar behaviors. These and other actions have kept many promising theories and tested practices on the bench and put too few in the game.

Recommendation six, therefore, advocates that foundations, acting individually and in concert, take increasing responsibility for moving educational capital into education practice through the use of information technology, collaborations and intermediaries.

Educational Capital as a Way to Make a Bigger and Longer-lasting Difference

This book is a down payment in the process of reconnecting foundations and education in ways that will assure the effectiveness of foundation grants in education. Leaders in foundations and education who use the idea of educational capital and its criteria should be able to look across different grants to find common elements that can contribute to their success. The approach should also help set performance objectives for program officers individually and foundations overall by giving priority to building educational capital and putting it to work. By challenging the close-to-the-vest character of grantmaking with openness, a further intention is the encouragement of new ideas and careful attention to developing the words to convey them. Intermediaries—old in fact but new in concept—require more and better support if their potential is to be realized. The recommendation inviting external review argues that in the company of openness, external review can import new ideas and behavior into the foundation-education relationship.

The recommendation of "professional development" bites off a big piece of what the book advocates. For reconnection to succeed, professional development must build up the elements of a profession. Professionalism in foundation work traces now mainly to the qualities of intelligence and integrity most program officers possess and practice. Without an enlarged functional sense of the direction in which educational excellence lies, intelligence and integrity alone have less to work with than they need. The recommendation on collaboration connects to an expanded view of professionalism as well. Without it, each collaboration would be ad hoc from start to finish and likely, therefore, to be too costly in time and effort to let momentum build and protocols be perfected.

Our final recommendation on moving educational capital into educational practice depends, of course, on progress in implementing the preceding proposals. This is not to say that good ideas in education won't continue to spread, much as they do now. It is, rather, to insist that today's relatively haphazard proliferation of ideas, findings and programs has not served well the cause of improving education in more cumulative and durable ways. The opportunity for foundations to move diffusion to a new level deserves some genuine risk taking on their part.

The overarching goal of the recommendations and the essays that comprise the book is to encourage a new look at how foundations work in education. The stakes are high, and progress is likely to be slow, and that makes it all the more important that we start now.

This summary is based on the Carnegie/Jossey-Bass publication of the same title, *Reconnecting Education and Foundations: Turning Good Intentions into Educational Capital*.

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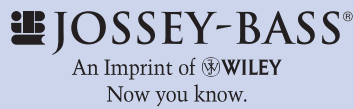
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Ray Bacchetti and Thomas Ehrlich, Editors
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