

*Cultivating Wisdom Within Education:
A Mind/Heart Synergy*

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ABSTRACT: Administering both a spiritual and scientific perspective to educational leadership could create a blend of “wisdom schools and “knowledge factories” within systems designed for learning. This perspective supports a belief that mind intelligence and heart wisdom should function as an interdependent dynamic; the heart’s latent capacity for universal intelligence and wisdom must, like the mind, be provided with models for its full growth and development. Because education systems have tended to focus on preparing students for the job market and retaining a healthy status quo, many leadership and teaching models have ignored the value of contemplation or volunteer work, as part of the curriculum to cultivate wisdom. However, some post-modernists are currently aiming to cultivate wisdom within education by endorsing a mind/heart synergy.

Résumé : Considérer le rôle de premier plan de l’enseignement d’un point de vue spirituel et scientifique, pourrait amener à faire fusionner les « écoles avisées » et les « usines du savoir » à l’intérieur même des systèmes d’enseignement. Cela viendrait à dire que l’intelligence raisonnée et la sagesse du cœur devraient fonctionner dépendamment l’une de l’autre dans une même dynamique. Pour la sagesse et l’intelligence universelle, comme la raison, le pouvoir caché de la sensibilité doit être prévu avec des modèles qui permettent son plein épanouissement et sa pleine croissance. Du fait que les systèmes d’enseignement ont tendance à préparer, avant tout, les étudiants pour le marché du travail et à leurs conserver un bon statu quo, de nombreux modèles de lignes directrices et d’enseignement ne prennent pas en compte la valeur de la réflexion ou du travail bénévole comme faisant partie de leur curriculum, ce qui étofferait leur sagesse. Aujourd’hui, il est cependant à noter que des postmodernes visent à former la sagesse dans le système éducatif par une synergie à la fois intuitive et raisonnée.

Introduction

For at least a century, an absence of spiritual direction and accountability has resulted in a closed-mindedness coupled with faulty suppositions about education (Myss, 2001; Nouwen, 1975). Denying spirituality within oneself and others is upholding “blindness of man and woman to an essential part of [their] own reality” (Nouwen, 1975, p. 38). Disclaiming spirituality within educational systems ignores the reality that people have multiple intelligences and therefore learn and gain wisdom in a variety of ways (Gardner, 1999). “Spirituality is one of the ways people construct knowledge and meaning” (Tisdell, 2003, p. 3). Therefore, excluding spirituality from inquiries and curriculum is ignoring intra-subjective ways of knowing.

Spiritual evolution is a process that involves synergizing mind and heart to cultivate wisdom. When people lose touch with their hearts, they become disconnected from their spirituality (Curtis & Eldredge, 1997). “Spiritual divorce” is a consequence of people distancing themselves from sacred ways of thinking and reverent ways of acting (Morrisseau, 1998). The danger is that a dualism of mind and heart keeps individuals alienated, resulting in cognitive states of heartlessness and lack of compassion for others. As noted by Curtis and Eldredge (1997), ignoring messages of the heart leads to a loss of passion for life, immoral acts and a deadening of spirituality:

We make sure to maintain enough distance between ourselves and others and even between ourselves and our own heart, to keep hidden the practical agnosticism we are living now that our inner life had been divorced from our outer life...We nonetheless are forced to give up our spiritual journey because our heart will no longer come with us. It is bound up in the little indulgences we feed it to keep it at bay. (p. 3)

Ideally, learning can be an ecstasy that cultivates mind and heart by eliciting an awakening of awe and passion within students (Doetzel, 2006). This awakening can result in the wisdom of creativity, connection with peers and an acknowledgement of the meaningfulness of their lives. Intra-subjective ways of knowing and multi-intelligence can be addressed within education by giving students assignments involving altruistic acts.

Many problems within educational systems can be attributed to “incomplete knowing” and a lack of wisdom, which is perpetuated by ignoring the higher elements of education (Doetzel, 2006). Because education systems tend to focus on preparing students for the job market and retaining a healthy status quo as indicators of their worth, many education models have centered on employment rather than contemplation or altruistic volunteer work. Denying a student’s awe, passion and creativity is like claiming an ocean is separate from water. Administering both a heart and mind perspective to teaching within the education system could create “wisdom schools as opposed to just “knowledge factories.”

A reductionist approach to some education has resulted in overlooking latent essences, such as a butterfly within a caterpillar or a tree within an acorn, which are metaphors for inner wisdom and higher consciousness within a person (Doetzel, 2006). Michelangelo, known for his wisdom, saw an angel in stone ...and then carved the angel that he saw. When we see the “best” in students, and treat them accordingly we often can help bring out the “best” in them, which can assist them to cultivate wisdom and reach their full potential selves.

“Wisdom schools” can provide curriculum that address students as being “persons” who require certain skills to assist them to become the best version of self and thus more marketable in the work force (Doetzel, 2006). Mind intelligence and heart wisdom should function as an interdependent dynamic; however, the heart’s latent capacity for deep universal intelligence and wisdom must, like the mind, be provided with models for its full growth and development. Many twenty-first century educators are in revolt against routine bureaucratic systems that promote silence about spiritual experiences, threaten to diminish human character and “deaden” their spirits (Sennett, 1998). The ideal educator of the new millennium is viewed as an inspirational teacher who integrates the intelligence of mind and spirit, and leads from the heart (Hawley, 1995; Secretan, 1999). “Followers are currently seeking leaders who will build their spiritual muscles” (Secretan, 1999, p. 8). To help build their spiritual muscles, and gain wisdom teachers and students require the freedom to express spirituality within education.

Educators are coming to a juncture in an evolutionary path where they are challenging the dualism of a disconnected mind and heart approach to teaching and alternatively are taking the progressive path of including spirituality within curriculum (Helliwell, 1999). “The spiritual dimension of our lives is an important source of . . . learning and is often represented through art form, music or story telling” (Tisdell, 2003, p. 22). When considering spirituality within the educational process, educators extend the theoretical acknowledgement of multiple intelligences, including the heart, and multiple ways in which people construct knowledge. For example, latent knowledge and wisdom can be awakened within people’s hearts through story telling (Vanier, 1998). In Sacred Scripture, spiritual masters introduced narratives to reveal truths and awaken people’s hearts. Vanier (1998) notes:

to speak of the heart is not to speak of vaguely defined emotions but to speak of the very core of our being. At the core we know we can be strengthened and rendered more truthful and more alive. Our hearts can become hard like stone or tender like flesh. We have to create situations where our hearts can be fortified and nourished. In this way, we can become more sensitive to others, to their needs, their cries, their inner pain, their tenderness, and their gifts of love. (p. 87)

Heart knowledge enables students to apply wisdom in cultivating spirit, bonding with peers, and creating community.

Reviewing educational practices entails acknowledging spiritual components that promotes a synergistic and caring approach to teaching (Creighton, 1999). A leading corporate executive, Max DePree, who built his company into one of the top 25 in the world, states "love and the awareness of the human spirit are more important than structure or policy" (Hoyle, 2002, p. 11). He asks "without understanding the cares, yearnings, and struggles of the human spirit, how could anyone presume to lead a group of people across the street" (p. 11)? People need to get in touch with their own spirituality to enable them to reach others' hearts and spirits (Hoyle, 2002).

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, there was a shift with respect to the ways in which educators understand education, leadership, and research is occurring (Begley & Leonard, 1999; Creighton, 1999; Hollaar, 2000; Spears, 1998). Many educators demonstrate a hunger for something beyond the traditional scientific paradigms and are mapping out new territories of spirituality despite tensions created by misunderstandings of the term "spirituality" (Holmes, 2003; Ornish, 1998) and its relationship to wisdom.

As noted by Tisdell (2003), "spirituality is not about pushing a religious agenda" (p. xi); spirituality is about honouring the sacredness and wholeness of life and moving past a dichotomization that results in oppression of people. A spiritual approach to education involves overcoming cynicism and rediscovering heart wisdom. According to Moffett (1994), even if some educators do not "accept any metaphysical meanings of spirituality" (p. 19), a rallying call for school reform alone "warrants spiritualising education" (p. 19) and cultivating wisdom.

Examining Meanings of Spirituality

Kinjerski and Skrypnek (2003) acknowledge that although spiritualising education is being addressed within some schools, an agreed-upon conceptual definition of "spirituality" continues to be in the developmental stages. "Spirituality" is a higher state of consciousness that promotes a feeling of being fully alive and elicits an awakening of awe, resulting in creativity, acts of passion, a connection with others and a celebration of the meaningfulness of one's life (Fox, 1991).

Spirituality within pedagogy is "the transformation of consciousness that takes place in the intersection of three agencies, the teacher, the learner, and the knowledge they produce together" (Lusted, 1986, p. 3). Spirituality in educational leadership is about connecting with the experience of re-awakening the sacred spark within oneself and others (Fox, 1995; Glazer, 1999). "Out of connection, grows compassion and passion--passion for people, for students' goals and dreams, for life itself" (Kessler, 1998, p. 52). Therefore, encouraging expressions of spirituality within leadership practices could be compared to the wisdom of applying a Hawthorne effect that results in workers becoming more

passionate about their work when they sense they are valued – and especially when they value themselves.

Spirituality is associated with renewed sensitivity to life, inner peace, connection, enlightenment, enthusiasm, patience and awe; further, the term characterizes an abiding human search for a connection with something greater and more trustworthy than our egos, and is viewed as a transformed state of consciousness towards connection, compassion, kindness, passion, and love (Fox, 1991; MacDonald, 2000). Because it is inherent and latent, spirituality may not be able to be defined or taught in traditional ways; thus, it needs to be uncovered, evoked, found, or recovered because it is like a light switch that needs to be turned on (Fox, 1991; Kessler, 1998). Through the process of contemplation, inquiry, and dialogue, one's spirituality can be recovered, which results in embracing the concept of oneness, while advocating service to others.

For the purpose of Doetzel's (2006) study, spirituality was defined as a latent inherent truth awakened by contemplation, rituals, peak life experiences and caring acts of kindness; when awakened, spirituality is a sensation of the sacred, a sentiment of hope, a feeling of enthusiasm and excitement, and a heartfelt sense of interconnection with others. The term "heart" was used metaphorically throughout the study to symbolize an awareness of the tacit nature of spirituality that makes it difficult to articulate in words or encompass in religious organizations. Within an educational leadership model, "heart" could metaphorically represent spirit, while "mind" could depict intellect (Doetzel, 2006).

Introducing Paradigm Shifts within Approaches to Educational Research

A reductionist approach to educational research has resulted in overlooking latent essences, such as a butterfly within a caterpillar or a tree within an acorn, which are metaphors for spirituality within a person (Doetzel, 2006). Descartes built the foundation for the construction of reductionism and the objective sciences (Abram, 1996). However, as noted by Abram (1996), "the tree bending in the wind, [a] cliff wall, the cloud drifting overhead: these are not merely subjective [or objective]; they are inter-subjective phenomena--phenomena experienced by a multiplicity of sensing subjects" (p. 38). Abram suggested that an evolving higher consciousness within humankind is resulting in a movement away from reductionism towards holistic perspectives within inquiry paradigms. Some educators question the assumptions of scientific enlightenment and "are re-discovering the realm of the sacred. Scientists and visionaries alike are identifying a spiritual hunger. On every side we hear calls to reinvent the sacred" (Albright & Ashbrook, 2001, p. xv). Reinventing the sacred means moving away from exclusively embracing a reductionist worldview that

excludes recognition of higher states of consciousness or a dynamic that cannot be encapsulated by experimental research (Lather, 1991; Wilber, 1996).

A shift towards acknowledging sacred paradigms helps to over-ride notions that an objective world exclusively defines reality (Lather, 1991; Wilber, 1996). "Within educational research, while positivism retains its hegemony over practice, its long-lost theoretical hegemony has been disrupted and displaced by newly hegemonic discourses of paradigm shifts" (Lather, 1991, p. 2). Changes are informed by new methods of collecting and interpreting data, which are not explainable within the Cartesian worldview of what is and what is not "real" (Albright & Ashbrook, 2001; Morse, 2000; Wilber, 1996). Such changes enable educators to "get outside of the imprisoning framework of assumptions" (Bateson, 1994, p. 43) learned within reductionist positivist hegemonies and to apply their own wisdom.

Quantum physics and holographic inquiries make people aware that there is more to the invisible world than they ever believed, and their five senses cannot be totally relied upon for insights about reality (Drouin & Rivard, 1997; Talbot, 1991). As noted by Abbott (1984), spiritual realities are comparable to a fourth dimension, everywhere accessible, but not always visible. Because invisible phenomena cannot be empirically explained within a dualistic model, their presence is commonly overlooked. For example, a Cartesian worldview cannot explain the holographic phantom limb phenomenon, "a sensation experienced by amputees that a missing arm or leg is still present" (Talbot, 1991, p. 26). However, not being able to explain scientifically this phenomenon does not stop amputees from encountering the reality of the sensation they feel. Their experience challenges the Cartesian perspective.

Examining Shifts from Cartesian Models to Post-Modernist Paradigms

An inquiry into spirituality within educational leadership is part of a broader movement, associated with post-modernist paradigm shifts towards acknowledging Cartesian tensions, related to a "flatland" worldview (Lather, 1991; Wilber, 1996); "flatland . . . is the ideal that the sensory, empirical and material world is the only world there is" (Wilber, 1996, p. 11). Influenced by Descartes' theories in the early seventeenth century, Cartesian scientific traditions have gradually devalued the sacredness and wholeness of individuals and of life (Albright & Ashbrook, 2001; Drouin & Rivard, 1997). However, as Wilber (1996) states, to deny the pre-existence of a former worldview because of its "inherent limitations" is to fall into another "dualistic trap" (p. 11). When educators attempt to convert from one leadership model to another, they discover that there are overlapping sections associated with former paradigms (Bateson, 1994).

If educators focus on merely trying to amend Cartesian approaches to research, they may miss the ways that both critical and appreciative inquiry “are equally expressions of spirit” (Wilber, 1996, p. 66). Most new paradigm approaches to inquiry have hidden subtle Cartesian dualisms. “As . . . higher stages of consciousness emerge and develop, they . . . include . . . components of the earlier worldview, then add their own new and more differentiated perceptions. They transcend and include. Because they are more inclusive, they are more adequate” (Wilber, 1996, p. 67). Therefore, acknowledging, complementing and balancing multiple worldviews are major goals of post-modernist inquiries and gaining wisdom.

As suggested by Bateson (1994), if we learned to read Descartes’ *cogito* beyond the first person concealed in the Latin verb, it could be expressed as “we think; therefore we are.” In different languages the terms “I” and “we” can have different meanings. Varying cultural meanings of what it is to be human and to be spiritual beings cannot “free us from the need to bring one another into being [because] I am only real and only have value as long as you are real and have value” (Bateson, 1994, p. 63). Reflective of sacred interdependence, human community becomes “reality” when people move beyond dualisms towards shared holistic visions. Although spirituality is not necessary for the realization of community, incorporating spirituality within leadership would encourage a synergistic approach to leading.

Lather (1991) states that post-modernism is the initiation of shifts associated with a post-industrial, post-colonial flux that challenges the concept of disinterested knowledge and confronts Cartesian anxieties. Postmodernism is thinking differently about how we think and becoming “multi-voiced;” it is weaving “varied voices together as opposed to putting forth a singular authoritative voice” (p. 9). Wilber (1996) refers to post-modernism as a continuous process of self-transcendence, “spirit-in-action,” “God-in-the-making,” and a balancing of male and female-orientated spirituality; it involves spirit unfolding itself, “an infinite process that is completely present at every stage” (p. 10). Morse (2000) takes the stand that “we are exploring a new paradigm, one in which science and spirituality join hands to help people on all sides of the mind-body argument to find common ground” (p. 26). Similarly, Abbott (1984) promotes a view of reality “in which the natural and supernatural worlds exist together in the harmony of a multidimensional framework” (p. 14). Wilber, Morse and Abbott’s perspectives suggest that post-modernists support a holistic, balanced worldview and they support the value of cultivating wisdom.

This paper suggests that administering both a spiritual and scientific perspective to educational leadership could create a blend of “wisdom schools and “knowledge factories” within systems designed for learning. The content indicates that mind intelligence and heart wisdom should function as an interdependent dynamic; the heart’s latent capacity for universal intelligence and wisdom must, like the mind, be provided with models for its full growth and development. After introducing some examples of a mind/heart synergy model

within education, the research reported in the paper may inspire further studies that would examine what wisdom schools actually look like.

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