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Teaching for empathy, compassion, meaning and connectedness to create communities of greater social harmony and cohesion: Rediscovering the spiritual dimension in education

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Abstract

The growing numbers of adolescents that appear to be suffering from some form of mental illness, most commonly depression, has been attested to by recent statistics (for instance, Mission Australia 2002 Youth Survey). Some of the responses to this situation have articulated the importance of responding to the physical, emotional, intellectual, social and cultural needs of young adolescents and to help them develop skills of resilience (START School Transition and Resilience Training, Department of Education and Training, Victoria 2003)

This paper will draw on existing literature to argue that spirituality is an innate element of being which therefore should have an essential role in the learning process. It will explore the relational nature of spirituality and discuss the implications such an understanding may have for the development of school environments and educational programs where teaching for resilience and connectedness; empathy, compassion and meaning may be promoted. This may lead to a more accessible and well-balanced learning process which may reduce chances of students becoming isolated and alienated and increase their chances of becoming productive and affirmed community members who will work towards greater social harmony and cohesion.

Introduction

I would like to begin by recounting two incidents. The first one was told to me by a female teacher who was working in an all-boy's school. She spoke of the difficulties she and other female staff had experienced where there was an entrenched macho, sports focused environment. The staff was relatively stable with little turnover each year and quite a few staff members would have been old boys of the school or, old boys within the system and the ration between female and male teachers was quite low. Apparently, there was an unvoiced recognition that new teachers could be challenged by some students in their first year but that this would settle down in the succeeding years and, in the case of female teachers, this appeared to be even more pronounced. The incident described to me was about two Year 8 boys dropping their pants to bare their behinds to a young female teacher in the gym. I would like to leave you with that image as I move to the next incident which occurred a few weeks later.

I was watching TV with my mid-20-year old son, which, perhaps, explains why the show we were tuned in to was The Panel on Channel 10. Well, about ten minutes into the show, while my mind was on other things and I was vaguely listening to the chatter and other inanities, the viewers were suddenly presented with a screen that showed one of the male presenters sitting at the centre of the table, with the rear view of two males standing on either side of him with their pants dropped to their knees. Needless to say, my son had a bit of a chuckle and I reacted with, 'Just what is so funny about that? Just what values are these adult men passing on to young boys?' My son's response was 'It's just grown men behaving stupidly.' I would like to leave you with those two images and revisit them further into this paper.

These two incidents bring me to the issues I would like to discuss in this paper, namely, teaching and learning that promote wellbeing in students who live in a secular, pluralistic society where Cole Porter's theme of 'Anything Goes' is the order of the day.

There are three points I would like to make in this paper:

The first examines the direction contained in the new Victorian curriculum documents which identify ten 'values' to be incorporated into educational programs and highlights some possible problems therein.

The second explores the concept of a spiritual dimension in education and suggests that this could provide a foundational base upon which these 'values' can be incorporated more successfully into educational programs.

Thirdly, a curriculum model is proposed which addresses the spiritual dimension in the learning process.

Background to Values Education

The advent of values in education is not a new concept. Since the 1970's the concept of Values Education and Values Clarification has intermittently received attention in government policies and curriculum reviews. Earlier in the 1960's, the first steps towards holistic education recognised the importance of developing the affective domain in individuals which incorporated emotions, attitudes, values and beliefs. However, in some people's perceptions, values and morals were seen to be derivatives of peoples' emotions and accordingly, were not seen to have any significant cognitive basis. The difficulty in reaching a common understanding of what constituted values education meant that it was not given the same status as a cognitive-based education. Hence, a dualism developed in educational thought, language and practice. People spoke of cognitive educational development and its "poor cousin" Values Education (Hill, 1991).

The lack of a shared understanding of Values Education meant that teachers were unclear about the expected outcomes and this was accompanied by a certain feeling of inadequacy to teach content that was non-defined, open to challenge, possibly invasive and, certainly, subjective. If we examine some definitions of the concept of 'Values', we can find evidence of this uncertainty:

The principles, fundamental convictions, ideals, standards or life stances which act as general guides to behaviour or as points of reference in decision making or the education of beliefs or action and which are closely connected to personal integrity and personal identity (Halstead J.M and Taylor M.J. (Ed), 1996)

They are the criteria by which we judge things (people, objects, ideas, actions and situations) to be good, worthwhile, desirable, or on the other hand, bad, worthless, despicable or of course, somewhere in between these extremes. We may apply our values consciously or they may function unconsciously (Shaver J.P. and Strong W., 1976).

Beliefs held by individuals to which they attach special priority or worth, and by which they tend to order their lives. A value is therefore more than a belief: but it is also more than a feeling. It has three elements...

1. Judgements of worth or obligation...
2. An emotional or affective element...
3. A disposition or commitment (Hill, B. V., 1991).

Given the lack of clear goals and the ambiguity surrounding the teaching of Values Education, the gap between affective and cognitive learning widened and, in the eighties and nineties, curriculum organizers moved away to new articulations about the importance of knowledge so that a content driven curriculum came to the fore again. This concentration was particularly heightened by the introduction of outcomes based curriculum that we inherited from the US and other western countries. In addition we have witnessed the advent of interventionist literacy and numeracy programs and closely monitored assessment and testing programs, all designed to improve the lives of our young.

Well, approximately a decade or so later we realize that we still have not got it right. There are still too many children who are not benefiting from mainstream educational programs and some of our young people are paying a huge price. (As I write this there is a report on the 7.30 report that approximately one-fifth of our young people are unemployed and the chances for them to become fully employed are unrealistic). Statistics abound which highlight the problems with young people – for instance, lack of employment, drug and alcohol issues, violence and abuse, homelessness, aspects of mental health and suicide (for instance, Mission Australia 2002 Youth Survey). Of further concern are recent figures indicating the rising tide of depression amongst children and adolescents.

It would appear appropriate then that, as we have reached the next cycle of curriculum initiatives in our educational history, some attention is being given to a more balanced approach that addresses both cognitive and affective learning. Earlier this year, our policy makers and curriculum advisors produced the *Victorian Curriculum Reform 2004 Consultation Paper* which presents a “Framework of ‘Essential Learning’”. Included in this document there is a direction that the incorporation of some values based learning will be included within this framework. The approach articulated in this document has been strengthened by the fact that different Australian states are adopting the same concept although perhaps the interpretations and translation into practice may differ. Prior to the release of this document, *The Values Education Study* managed by the Curriculum Corporation was commissioned by the Federal Minister for Education in 2002 and was supported by the State and Territory ministers. It was designed to develop and demonstrate current practice in Values Education and to provide an informed basis for promoting improved Values Education in Australian schools. Finally, it made recommendations on a set of Principles and a Framework for improved values education in schools. Sixty-nine schools were involved in the project, each receiving funding as individuals or as members of a cluster group. It was expected that the findings of the study would enable the realization of the ultimate vision – that every school would address values education in an ongoing, planned and systematic basis by:

- examining the school’s mission/ethos in consultation with their community;

- developing student civic and social skills and building resilience; and
- ensuring values are incorporated into teaching programmes across the key learning areas (Curriculum Corporation, 2003, p.2).

In brief, the study, while acknowledging that ‘values are often highly contested’, identified a set of ten values based on the data collected from the 69 schools that took part in the project: tolerance and understanding, respect, responsibility, social justice, excellence, care, inclusion and trust, honesty, freedom, being ethical.

It was claimed that these ten values were seen to be consistent with Australia’s democratic traditions including beliefs in equality, freedom and the rule of law, and our overall commitment to a multicultural society where all are entitled to justice and a fair go. It is this claim or assumption that becomes problematic. While these schools undoubtedly participated willingly, meaningfully and put enormous time and effort into exploring an approach to values education as per the guidelines of the project, what does this really mean for the individual and the community in the everyday? Hugh Mackay (2004) in his discussion on values describes a ‘Values Gap’ (p.21) which he sums up as:

If you ask me to tell you how I think I should live – what values I should live by – I can tell you. But don’t look at my life for the evidence (Mackay, 2004, p. 21).

As Mackay makes obvious, when we talk about values, most of us can list certain values that we would consider universal and we would be surprised if someone challenged these suppositions. In an ideal world our surprise would be understandable but in the pluralistic context of Australian society consisting of multi faiths, multi cultures, sub cultures and, even more subtle, hidden cultures (where I say and publicly promote one thing but my lived practice may resemble something quite different)ⁱ such claims, arguably, lack some credibility.

The terminology used is also problematic since it is based on the assumption that values are a good thing. Certainly, there has been some discussion overseas that the more appropriate term for what we are attempting is Virtues Education (Popov, 2000). Popov argues that values are things we value and care about which are not always good things, and they usually are culture and class specific. What some families or countries value, others don’t. In comparison, virtues are innate good qualities of the human person.

Virtues are much more elemental than values. While values are culture-specific, virtues are universally valued by all cultures (Popov, 2000, p. xix).

Indeed, there would appear to be some logic to this argument. Young people today are regularly exposed to certain values and life styles adopted by the rich and famous, sporting heroes, politicians and others that would give lie to an assumption that all values are good things. What is frequently played out in our newspapers and across television screens are not the ten values listed in the above document. Instead we see, hear and read, time and again, incidents of deception and misinformation to achieve power (and votes); of greed and lust; of undervaluing certain members of society by the insidious use of labels and other derogatory terms to identify them and so on.

At this point I will return to the two incidents I described at the start of the paper and pose certain questions in relation to the Year 8 boys. How would we assist those young boys to understand that their behaviour was inappropriate when we juxtapose their situation with the second incident I described? How do we encourage them to be truthful and honest when they have witnessed the re-election of a government whose leader/s who have been exposed as deceivers and misleaders? How do we develop in them a respect for girls and women when they hear of alleged cases of violence and rape involving highly paid footballers who are their role models!

Returning to the Values Study, the final reference I would like to make here relates to the literature review undertaken for the project, mention was made of the increased interest in values education in other countries. In particular, the legislation in Britain about the inclusion of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all students is referred to. However, drawing on the above discussion, I would argue that there is quite a distinct divide between an educational framework that incorporates spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects that are named distinctly and one that collapses these elements into one word – Values. A full discussion of this legislation and resultant practices in Britain is beyond the scope of this paper but I have discussed this elsewhere (de Souza 2001, de Souza, Cartwright & McGilp, 2004), however, I recall attending a conference in Britain on children's spirituality in 2000, several years after the legislation had been passed where the confusion and angst amongst many participants were reflected in the question they posed: What is spiritual education and how do we teach it? Thus, confusion and ambiguity was ever present in the translation of policy into practice.

This paper contends that Values Education, if it is to be at all successful in practice and not result in confusion and ambiguity, must be developed within a framework that authenticates the values that are selected as important. In religious schools, for instance, certain values will be seen as essential for a particular religious practice, thus, Gospel values or Islamic Values are imbued with certain understandings and meanings thereby becoming 'value laden' within the particular framework of the school. In a secular school system, some other framework must be developed to give the chosen values credibility and meaning. If students and teachers understand the significance and meaning of particular values within such a framework, there is a greater chance that the incorporation of a set of common values into the curriculum across all schools will be successful. It is proposed here that such a framework can be based on the spiritual dimension in education. However, the word 'spiritual' because of its previously close association with religion and religious traditions in the western world often provokes distrust and even hostility within secular educational contexts. Consequently, while there has been much discussion and debate in other western countries about its importance in education, in Australia, most curriculum advisors and educators appear to have ignored it. Instead, it is the adolescent health professionals and youth and social workers that have recognized its role in promoting the wellbeing of young people. In such a context, I believe, there is a pressing need to explore contemporary understandings of spirituality and its relationship to education and learning.

Contemporary understandings of the nature of spirituality: An expression of connectedness

For many years, spirituality and religion have been closely interlinked in the western world so that, very often, the terms have been used interchangeably. It is the contention of this paper that spirituality is an innate human quality which has been nurtured and expressed through religious frameworks, the latter being constructed by the human person to serve that very purpose. Nonetheless, in today's world, the traditional institutions that have nurtured human spirituality such as religious traditions, families and local communities have changed considerably in their structure and importance, and their influence in the lives of many young people has seriously diminished. New structures and processes are required and this is an area that educators and education should address because, firstly it is a human trait and therefore requires nurturing and expression, and secondly, we have new understandings about the learning process and about the interdependence of mental, emotional and spiritual aspects in promoting wellbeing.

To begin with, spirituality has been recognized quite distinctly as a relational dimension of being (for instance, Eckersley, 2004; Harris & Moran, 1998; Hay & Nye, 1998; Tacey, 2000, 2003). Harris (1998) refers to spirituality as 'our way of being in the world in the light of the Mystery at the core of the universe' and suggests that the connectedness that many young people feel to the human and non-human world acts as a trigger that prompts their thinking and action for social justice (p.109). Elaborating on the relational theme, Nye (Hay and Nye 1998) coined the term 'relational consciousness' to describe children's spirituality because they identified a 'distinctive property of mental activity, profound and intricate enough to be termed 'consciousness', and remarkable for its confinement to a broadly relational, inter-and intra-personal domain (p. 113).

Nye went on to describe the children's awareness of being in a 'I-Others', I-Self', I-World' and I-God' relationship and suggested that it is this relational aspect of children's lives that led to 'meaningful aesthetic experience, religious experience, personal and traditional responses to mystery and being, and mystical and moral insight (Hay & Nye 1998, p.114).

In his discussions on contemporary spirituality in Australia, Tacey (2004) says:

Spirituality seeks a sensitive, contemplative, transformative relationship with the sacred, and is able to sustain levels of uncertainty in its quest because respect for mystery is paramount... spirituality arises from a love of an intimacy with the sacred (p. 11).

Later, Tacey refers to the boredom and frustration experienced and, perhaps, demonstrated by his university students when

Our own teaching fails to 'lift their spirits' or to induct them into a living spiritual reality that underpins their lives? Spirituality is not only about the deep, the meaningful and the serious, but it also connects to the very wellsprings of human vitality, and when it is omitted or repressed we unwittingly repress a great deal of human energy (p. 57).

Another perspective is offered by Eckersley (2004) who alludes to a relational element in his discussion on wellbeing. He cites the work of Australian researchers Bruce Headey and Alex Wearing who claim that 'A sense of meaning and purpose is the single attitude most strongly associated with life satisfaction' and adds:

Meaning is, in turn, related to self-transcendent values, strong religious beliefs, membership of groups, dedication to a cause and clear life goals. So meaning is closely linked to belonging, in a social and spiritual as well as a personal sense (p.79).

Another relevant field of study, which has engaged in the discussion on contemporary spirituality, presents insights into the biological nature of spirituality also suggesting that it is an essential and distinguishing human trait. These perspectives have drawn on recent advances in brain research which have involved exploring the functions of large areas of the cerebral cortex (Newberg, 2001; Persinger, 1996; Ramachandran & Blakeslee, 1998). In a discussion of mysticism and the neurology of transcendence, Newberg claims that there is nothing magical about mystical experience, that it is 'nothing more or less than an uplifting sense of genuine spiritual union with something larger than the self' (2001, p. 101). He concludes that 'humans are natural mystics blessed with an inborn genius for effortless self-transcendence' (p. 113) and that like all experiences, moods, and perceptions, these unitary states are made possible by neurological function. More specifically, they are the result of the softening of the sense of self and the absorption of the self into some larger sense of reality that we believe occurs when the brain's orientation area is deafferented, or deprived of neural input' (pp. 113-4). Thus, Newberg's work also highlights spirituality as a relational dimension of self. Yet a different perspective on the relational dimension of the human person is offered by Albright & Ashbrook (2001) who cite research conducted by Hubel and Wiesel to argue that to be human is to respond to a human presence (p. 16).

While much of the research into the functioning of the brain and the biology of spirituality are still relatively new and controversial, they do raise some interesting points about the relational nature of spirituality as an innate element in the build up of the human person. They also provide a plausible reason to investigate and address the influences on and expressions of the spirituality of young people in terms of their connectedness to Self and to Other in the community and the world and to an unseen presence. This last aspect is important and often neglected in our materialistic, consumeristic culture which is grounded in a 'this world' mentality and denies an outlet for the liminal experiences that are sometimes, although reluctantly, voiced by many (McQuillan 2003). A study that confirms the occurrence of such experiences was conducted by Hay and Hunt (2000) from the University of Nottingham into spiritual experiences of British people:

Something extraordinary appears to be happening to the spiritual life in Britain. At least that's what we think, after a first look at the findings of the 'Soul of Britain' survey recently completed by the BBC. The results show that more than 76 per cent of the population would admit to having had a spiritual experience. In hardly more than a decade, there has been a 59 per cent rise in the positive response rate to questions about this subject. Compared with 25 years ago, the rise is greater than 110 per cent (Hay & Hunt, 2000, p.846).

Finally, the literature and research that affirmed the concept of spirituality as a distinctly human trait, which is expressed through the individual's sense of connectedness to the human and non-human world, provided the basis for a pilot study conducted in regional Australia (de Souza, Cartwright & McGilp, 2002). We investigated the perceptions and expressions of twenty-two 16-20 year old young people of their spirituality. The sample included young people who came from a range of backgrounds, some at school, some in alternative educational programs, some from workplace programs and some in employment. About a half acknowledged that they had some commitment to and/or practice within a religious tradition but the rest of the participants had no such claims or experience. Nonetheless, the findings indicated that the influences on and their expressions of their spirituality had many similarities.

To begin with, the thinking and behaviour patterns of each of the participants showed different levels of connectedness, ranging from the close circles of family, friends and their immediate community to the wider community and a Transcendent Other. Their sense of identity and self worth appeared to be linked to the positive relationships developed in their formative years and there were relational elements in their discussion of the significant moments in their lives or the social justice issues that concerned them.

Overall, the findings from this study supported the concept offered by Newberg in his neurology of transcendence where he described a movement towards Absolute Unitary Being, that is when the self blends into other and mind and matter become one and the same (p. 156). Newberg suggests that there was a 'unitary continuum' where, at one point, a person may interact with others and the world but experience it as something from which s/he is apart. However, as s/he moves up the unitary continuum, that separateness becomes less distinct (p. 145).

In a similar way, the young people involved in the study appeared to move through close circles of connectedness beginning with the relationships that were formed within their immediate environment during their early years. The movement towards maturity was accompanied by and an ever extending circle that reached out to connect them to their wider community. Sometimes, these circles spiralled out to include a connectedness and empathy with people who were different from themselves. Each circle brought new depths of learned wisdom, empathy and compassion which was expressed by the way in which the individual interacted with the Other. Importantly, the spiralling movement had a forward motion but could also falter and retreat, depending on the context of the individual's life experiences. Arguably, it could be assumed that the forward motion that was evident for some of the participants would ultimately lead to the widest circle and the deepest level of connectedness (to Other and to Self respectively) where the possibilities that an individual could experience an all-consuming oneness with the Other and perhaps enter a mystical state within which they could be elevated to a different space of deep sacredness and transcendence in their everyday.

The findings and conclusions reached in the above study have some implications for the design of learning environments and strategies in educational programs that allow students to develop this dimension of their lives, in particular, realizing the notion of ever widening and ever deepening relational circles which encompass the individual's life and learning. However, if we examine what is happening in schools, we find at

the primary level, the focus on highly structured cognitive learning through literacy and numeracy blocks often leaves little time for affective and inner reflective learning. Further, the standardized testing programs may put teachers under pressure to develop learning tasks that are test-related since, in some instances, the results of these tests have been used to promote one school over another. This is equally the case at secondary level where, particularly in the last few years of schooling, learning and teaching is focused on preparing students for the Year 12 end-of-school certificate which will give them a pathway to university, other tertiary study, apprenticeships or the workplace. Once again, these results are often used for schools' promotional purposes, and in a highly competitive world, this puts enormous pressure on teachers and students. Hence, learning programs continue to compartmentalize knowledge and skills and they become focused on the achievement of particular kinds of knowledge that have been prioritised according to social, political and commercial perceptions of their usefulness, usually in terms of material gain. All these features contribute to creating an environment where competition, fragmentation and division are promoted amongst students. In such a context, little is done to nurture the relational aspects of a student's life, or to connect them to their inner lives in terms of their creativity and imagination. As both these reflect the spiritual dimension of learning it often remains overlooked and unrecognised.

To this end, I use a model with my student-teachers that evolves from an understanding of connectedness. It recognizes the interrelatedness of theories of intellectual, emotional and spiritual intelligences which promote a holistic approach to learning, and it acknowledges the links between the perceiving, thinking, feeling and intuiting elements in the learning process.

A learning model that promotes connectedness

The centrality of the intellect in western education has for a long time resulted in an undisputed focus on cognitive learning. Gardner's Multiple Intelligence theory also evolved from cognitive learning theory. It is only in the past decade that theories of Emotional Intelligence (Salovey & Mayer, 1997, 2000; Goleman 1995) and Spiritual Intelligence (Emmons, 2000; Zohar & Marshall, 2000) have been articulated and investigated. Both these theories are offered with the contention that they are imperative in helping the individual to live and function effectively as thinking, feeling and reflecting beings:

Neither IQ nor EQ, separately or in combination, is enough to explain the full complexity of human intelligence nor the vast richness of the human soul and imagination... We use SQ to wrestle with questions of good and evil and to envision unrealized possibilities – to dream, to aspire, to raise ourselves out of the mud (p. 5).

While these theories have invited both support and criticism (for instance, R. Bar-On & J.D.A. Parker, 2000; Fontana 2003) they do raise some questions about the learning process. Stocker, for instance, (1984, 2003) claims that emotionality and affect have often been ignored by cognitive theorists and that attention should be given to these areas because without emotion and the affect, features such as 'disassociation, depersonalisation, and of various neuroses, features of borderline conditions, and psychoses' may present, and 'it may be impossible to live a good human life... it may well be impossible to live a human life, to be a person at all' (p. 258).

Another perspective is offered by d'Aquili and Newberg (1999) who define intelligence as 'the ability to learn, to solve problems, and to deal with new or unanticipated situations' and, basing their argument on neurophysiological criteria, they describe three aspects of intelligence: abstract objective, creative intuitive and social (p. 70). The first is the intelligence has been central to western education programs and the associated learning process can be described as cognitive learning: extracting meaning from reality by generating concepts, by juxtaposing or comparing one element with another in the form of opposites, and by the perception of efficient causality operating between perceived or conceptualized elements of cognition (d'Aquili and Newberg, 1999, p. 70).

The second is about creative problem solving which involves a 'rhythm between the left and right hemispheres of the brain such that together they arrive at an answer to a given problem. The learning process here is that a problem is perceived by the conscious mind that cannot be solved rationally. The movement goes deeper as it sifts through data stored in the unconscious mind based on previous perceptions. Through this process connections are made between new and previous perceptions and learning and a solution is intuitively arrived at – the 'Aha' or 'Eureka' moment.

The third aspect of intelligence is social intelligence which is about being able to interact with others. Indeed, d'Aquili and Newberg, 1999 argue that while the 'brain generates and regulates social behaviours, social interactions also alter the function of the brain' (p. 72), and they cite studies which show that:

animals which are raised in enriched environments show superior learning as well as a higher number of nerve cells in the brain. In addition, the brains of animals raised in enriched environments have more complex interconnections between the neurons in their brain than those of animals in less rewarding environments (p. 72).

These theories of intelligences do have implications for the development of holistic learning programs that address these three aspects of being and provide the framework for the learning model that I am proposing. They recognize that both the outer world and the inner world of the individual are significant for learning and growth to maturity. Certainly, the emotions and spirituality are elemental to the inner world of the individual, allowing the individual to connect to Self. If education seeks to address the whole person, both the outer and the inner lives of the individual needs to be addressed and nurtured.

I will now turn to the elements that, I suggest, operate in the learning process, that is, the connections between rational thought which is linked to the process of thinking, the emotions which trigger feelings, and spirituality which draws on the unconscious mind to enable the individual to creatively and intuitively find solutions. This concept of the learning process supports Jung's theory that humans experience phenomena in four ways:

1. Perceiving the facts; that is, taken in through the senses.
2. Thinking about them logically.
3. Developing feelings which produce value judgements
4. Intuiting by looking beyond the facts to certain other possibilities (O'Connor, 1985, 1988, p. 75).

The integration of these four processes, perceiving, thinking, feeling and intuiting enables us to become familiar with both our inner and outer worlds. It raises the potential for learning to become transformational. Without integration it is possible that learning may remain at a superficial or 'surface' learning level.

The role of intuition has often been overlooked in traditional learning programs but in more recent times its importance is being recognized. Again, a full discussion of intuition is beyond the scope of this paper but a few insights will be offered here. Del Prete (2002) claims that to activate and grow in our capacity to know the living dimensions of truth requires practice in an intuitive way of knowing, a way that has been largely ignored in western society (p. 171). Claxton (2003) offers the description that intuitions are 'holistic interpretations of situations based on analogies drawn from a largely unconscious experiential database' (p. 50). Eraut (2003) concurs with Claxton's description of intuition but argues that if intuition is a process it should be referred to as a 'way to knowing' rather than a 'way of knowing' (p. 256).

Gary Klein, a cognitive psychologist, who studied the seemingly intuitive decision making actions of fire fighters concluded that intuition was born out of experience because experienced decision makers perceives a different world from what an inexperienced person may perceive:

Intuition is really a matter of learning how to see – of looking for cues or patterns that ultimately show you what to do... [when] sensory perceptions detect subtle details... that would have been invisible to less-experienced fire fighters (Breen, 2000).

Bede Griffith says of intuition that it is

a knowledge which derives not from observation and experiment or from concepts and reason but from the mind's reflection on itself. What distinguishes the human mind above everything else is not its powers of observation and experiment, which animals also possess to some degree, nor its power of logical and mathematical reasoning, which a computer can imitate quite successfully, but its power of self-reflection (Barnhart (Ed), 2001).

This is further clarified by O'Connor (1985, 1988, 1990) who draws on Jung to explain intuition as unconscious perception which he identifies as different to sensation. While the latter is about perception through the senses by which we learn that something exists, intuition is the 'function that tells us of future possibilities. It is the proverbial hunch and the function that informs us about the atmosphere that surrounds an experience or event (p. 76 – 77). Indeed, it is that 'Aha' moment that so many of us have experienced.

Returning then to the model of learning that I am proposing, it recognizes that while students' learning is based on what they perceive through their senses, their initial response may be at the intellectual level (knowledge based) or the emotional level (feelings based). Either of these responses can lead to an integration of the two so that the intellect and the emotions work together to produce a higher and a deeper level of knowledge and engagement. However, it also recognizes that unconscious perceptions continue through the process so that learning must go beyond the surface, it must touch the depth of being, that is the 'soul' of the student. It must reach that core where

conscious learning merges with unconscious learning to become transformed, which may and should lead to outward expressions of changed thinking and behaviour, the ultimate goal of education. It is at this level that intuiting becomes the third aspect of an integrated learning process so that the learner's response becomes transformed without her/him consciously knowing exactly how or why the change has occurred. The motion then is generative, moving from initial conscious and unconscious perceptions at the surface through thoughts and feelings that merge with previous unconscious learning and instincts at the centre before returning to the surface in transformed expressions.

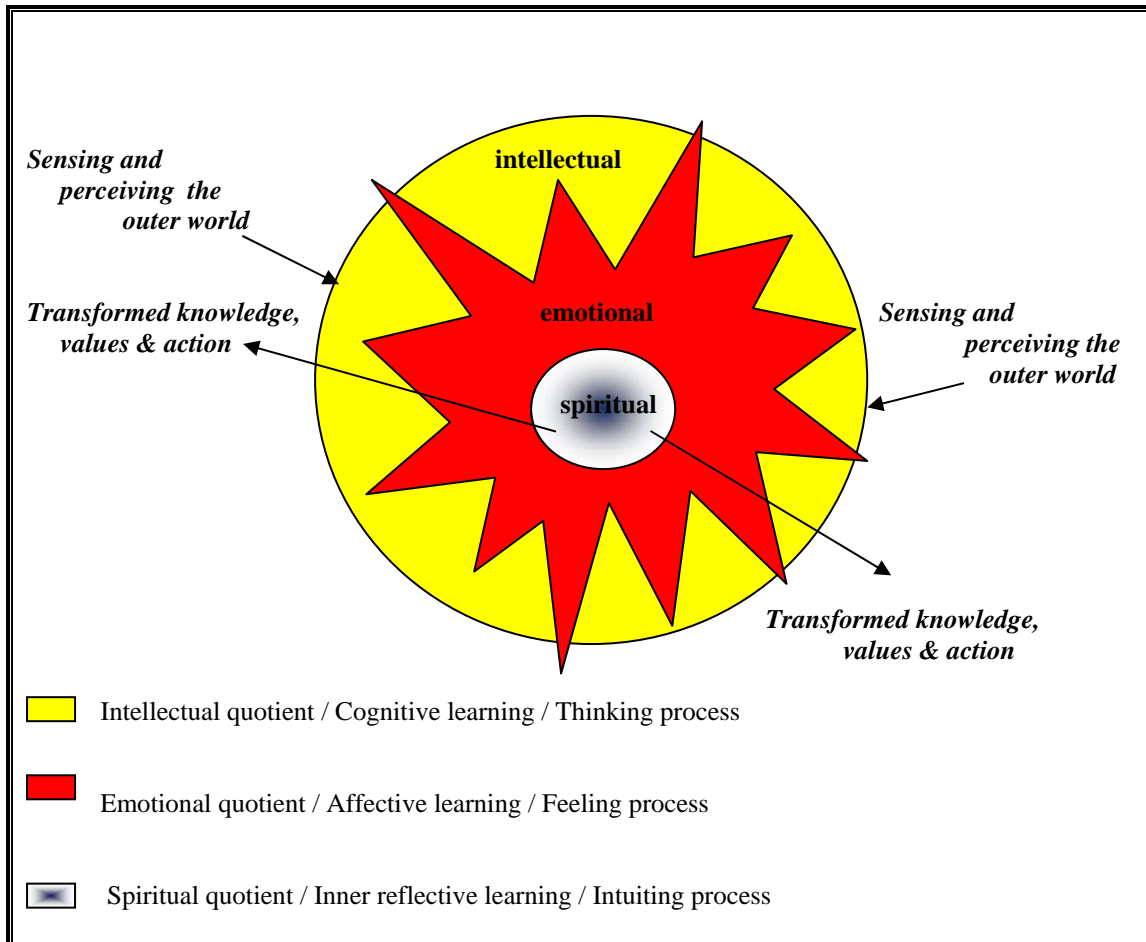


Figure 1. A model for learning - perceiving, thinking, feeling, intuiting, transforming.

In order to apply this learning model, teachers need to be educated to look beyond the achievement of knowledge that remains at the surface level. They need to recognize the role of the feelings and intuition in the learning process. This model also challenges the teacher to find new ways to communicate the content in order to seriously engage their students. Using learning strategies that challenge and engage students who may be at different levels of knowledge and experience is vital and they call for the use of excellent resources and an appropriate periods of time. Time is needed for discussion and sharing of ideas at group and class levels followed by time for contemplation and reflection. Students need to develop skills that allow them to see through the eyes of another, and to walk in their shoes which could be achieved through various forms of play, improvisation and other drama activities. This may

mean designing learning environments that allow this to happen with an effective use of poetry and literature, art works, film, and music.

Ultimately, if schools use a foundation for their curriculum which recognizes the inter-relatedness of the intellectual, emotional and spiritual dimensions in education, they will provide a framework within which the ten values mentioned earlier can be recognized as expressions of the individual's connectedness to Self and Other in the human and non-human world. Thereby, a rationale is provided for the selection and authentication of these values and will raise the potential for students to connect with and reflect on the content at their own levels and to connect with the Other in their own classrooms.

A final word, if educators wish to follow a path that allows them to nurture the spirituality of young people and help them find meaning and purpose in their lives, they need to recognize that such a quest requires more than individuals working to achieve this within their own classrooms. Educational policies need to change and whole school involvement needs to occur. The relational aspect of young people's lives should be recognized as a vital aspect of their spiritual, emotional and therefore, intellectual wellbeing. Schools should revisit their learning environments and offerings to discover their effectiveness in addressing both the outer and inner lives of their students which promote a sense of connectedness, trust and hope. Time and space should be included in the daily or weekly timetable that allows for silence, solitude and contemplation in surroundings that inspire peace and a sense of the sacred. Learning activities that promote empathy and compassion, imagination and creativity should be included in lesson planning and students should be encouraged to accept responsibility for themselves and others, and to commit to action for the common good. School assemblies and other occasions when the school community comes together should focus on the celebration of the stories of the individuals and community, and on experiences that promote joy, magic, awe and wonder. Only then will the spiritual dimension be recognized and addressed appropriately so that educational programs may offer their students increased opportunities to become empathetic, compassionate, meaningful and hope-filled people.

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