

Inspiring the Desire and Passion to Learn

A Literature Review

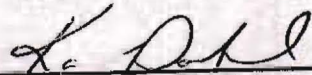
by

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**ABSTRACT**

Self-reflection promotes awareness and learning. Character development is enhanced through understanding the history of current knowledge, as well as, the knowledge and experience required to successfully improve accuracy and efficiency in application. Creativity, passion and purpose facilitate innovation, efficiency and health. Critical thinking skills are necessary for releasing human potential. Communication, organization, and people skills can all affect the performance of both individuals and organizations. Concepts from the realm of spirituality have the potential to improve the psychological, physical and organizational structures of people, processes and culture. Change requires adaptability, flexibility, courage, compassion, empathy and tolerance of creative chaos. Education and learning can foster healthier environments for dealing with change and growth in education, business, health-care, counseling and other types of organizations. The workplace and community organizations must provide conducive

environments and structure for promoting individual initiative and cohesive, collaborative teamwork. Addressing the spirit, soul and body needs of humanity has the potential for creating healthier environments of respect for bridging the paradox inherent in issues of diversity, cohesiveness, unity, individual initiative and teamwork. Combining theories of spirituality and psychology may provide new avenues of intervention for exposing the subtle, unspoken, and unrecognized limitations created by a lack of awareness and the inability to reconcile these paradoxical dilemmas.

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## Chapter I: Introduction

### *Statement of the Problem*

There are always elements of resistance to change and shifts in thinking, especially in the scientific community, which also trickles into rejection and resistance to any major paradigm shifts that include educational goals and strategies (Amen, 1998). New information progresses to dissemination and application only after a lengthy peer review process that usually takes years. Self-knowledge and the ability to make personal choices require participation in recognizing and changing the weaknesses in current paradigms that affect our lives. Understanding the current history of traditional paradigms or models that direct our physical and mental health, as well as our learning and education, can help us to identify areas of weakness and invite motivated change agents to create healthy change and shifts in current practices.

Principles of spirituality offer individuals a universal model and vehicle for guiding the process of change and overcoming the resistance accompanied when challenging traditional and entrenched habits of limited, fragmented thinking and practice. We can all gain access to improving the quality of our education, our work environments and of our interpersonal relationships with others and within ourselves (Seashore, Shawver, Thompson, & Mattare, 2004). Many spiritual principles and applications correlate with positive, proactive practices advocated by sociological, psychological and educational pioneers.

### *Purpose/Need*

The purpose of this researcher's internship and Plan B research is to cultivate a collaborative, innovative, creative and transformational learning environment. The researcher is currently teaching an Introduction to Psychology course and would like to generalize the applications utilized in this research to other learning environments not only in education, but also to include other learning environments in organizational and community development. There is currently a need for a learning and teaching experience that is capable of addressing the global pace of change and expanding diversity issues. Current research is available to address the mind and body connections related to an applicable and transformational learning experience needed for a release of latent human potential in every individual. Transformational Learning and Appreciative Inquiry are two theories of organizational development that aim to create healthier people, processes and culture.

### *Objectives*

The objective of this project is to address psychosocial needs for change that include human emotional, psychological, and spiritual factors for transforming organizations and improving organizational structures in order to produce flexibility, adaptability, innovation and creativity. The goal is to address the individual and corporate human need for balance, wholeness and health throughout the organizational structures that we participate in on a daily basis. Appreciative Inquiry and Transformational Learning provide processes that inspire the pursuit of learning, change and culture transformation.

This research project coincides with many of UW-Stout stated strategic university priorities such as preparing students for a global society and work force; creating a

campus climate/culture as a “learning organization”; creating, extending and defining a culture of affirmation; and collaborating and creating new forums and opportunities for bringing together people and relationships who share a common goal to negotiate and define meaning and continuous development.

### *Definition of Terms*

*Transformational Learning.* Transformational learning is another established organizational development tool that can facilitate health promotion. This theory was introduced by Professor Jack Mezirow, at Columbia University in the 1970’s (DeCogna, 2005). The theory argues that learners can change the way they make sense of the world around them through critical reflection and experience. New ways of thinking are needed in order to create new ways of acting. The goal is to change behavior. “The transformational learning process is intuitive, holistic, and contextually based” (Baumgartner, 2001, pg. 17).

*Appreciative Inquiry.* The principles of Appreciative Inquiry propose that people make lasting changes more effectively and less traumatically when they work backwards from a vision of their dreams or goals (French, Bell, and Zawacki, 1994). Working backwards from a vision of our ideals creates motivation, passion and commitment for change. Change interventions can become creative explorations for problem solving. Appreciative Inquiry is an organizational development tool that frames inquiry through positive and exploratory questions in an effort to challenge traditional schemas and to create an expanded framework for change. Traditional evaluation has focused on problems, whereas appreciative inquiry focuses on what is working and encourages an infusion of cognitive energy by releasing participants from paradigms that are limiting.

Appreciative inquiry attempts to develop processes that promote awareness of limiting schemas as well as processes that are directed at minimizing cognitive load.

*Spirituality.* Spirituality can be distinguished from religion (Miller, 1999). “Spirituality (like personality or character) is an attribute of individuals. Religion, in contrast, is an organized social entity” (pg.6). Spirituality, like psychotherapy, aims to establish guidelines or a “road map” of healthy mental and behavioral practices. Both classic psychology and spirituality seek to address the paradox of the human potential for good and evil. An appreciative inquiry of spirituality pursues the quest for identifying and guiding interested individuals through the labyrinth of obstacles in order to achieve wholeness, harmony, passion and release of the fullness of human development. Spirituality emphasizes the interconnectedness and necessity of addressing a holistic vision of human growth and maturity along a developmental path of mind, will and emotions; spirit, soul and body.

### *Methodology*

The purpose of this literature review is to identify effective and practical principles for application of spirituality and mental health to everyday life in the context of relationships, at work and within ourselves.

## Chapter II: Literature Review

### ADULT EDUCATIONAL AND DISSEMINATION STRATEGIES BASED ON "HOW WE LEARN"

The purpose of this literature review is to present ideas for bridging the gap between theory and practice by examining effective and creative processes for teaching, inspiring and managing people and cultivating dynamic cultures of individual and group collaboration, innovation, and productivity.

#### *Transformative Learning*

Depth psychology offers a framework for helping learners work through unconscious psychic conflicts and dilemmas, "and of fostering opportunities among our learners for meaning making, deep change, and transformation" (Dirkx, 2006, pg.16). Student emotions can be interpreted literally, for example as anger or frustration with the instructors teaching methods or they may be a reflection of a "deeper, underlying personal or transpersonal issue that has been evoked by the instructional processes" (pg. 17). Psychic dilemmas may be defined as semi-conscious conflict produced by opposing choices. "The experience of this dilemma is often experienced as a draining away of psychic energy, while its resolution through conscious realization and reworking is often accompanied by deeper insights into the self and a renewed sense of energy and life" (pg. 17). "Using Jungian theory can help us identify and understand the powerful role that emotions and unconscious dynamics potentially play in the transformative dimensions of adult learning" (Dirkx, pg. 18).

"When we take seriously the responsibility of developing a more conscious relationship with the unconscious dimensions of our being, we enter into a profoundly

transformative, life-changing process” (Dirkx, 2006, pg. 19). Without a conscious relationship of the dynamic forces that influence our lives, our lives are less meaningful and we may even experience the potentially destructive effects of a divided life that may take the form of personal pathologies, obsessions, compulsions, addictions or depression. The structure of learning environments can produce either fear or anger in regards to the complaint that there is either too much structure or not enough structure and guidance in the learning process. This may be a reflection of either the need or the fear “of dependence on strong, external authority figures” (pg. 18). Learners often find themselves in the grips of strong emotional conflicts that remain unconscious. Conscious participation with the influences surrounding us “directs our psychic energy toward creative, life-enhancing, constructive, and potentially transformative activities” (pg. 19). Research suggests that developing awareness “involves cognitive, affective, somatic, and spiritual processes” (Dirkx, pg. 19). Reflective analysis, story, symbol and ritual provide tools for transformative learning.

#### *Ways of Knowing and Transformative Learning – Teaching with Authenticity*

Transformative learning requires the instructor to be authentic and to not be afraid of introducing multiple ways of knowing and learning. “Fostering transformative learning requires taking learners out of their comfort zone, both cognitively and affectively, while providing sufficient support” (Davis-Manigaulte, Yorks and Kasl, (2006), pg. 33-34). As neurologist and author Antonio Damasio (1999) notes, rational ideas are better understood and learned if they are anchored in one’s entire being rather than as facts stored in one’s short-term memory to be spit back on a test, only to be forgotten afterward” (as cited in Tolliver and Tisdell, 2006), pg. 39). Promoting transformational

learning requires individual instructors to determine what will be the instructor's responsibility and what will be the responsibility of the learner? Each class represents its own dynamics and calls for customized adaptations. The instructor must take responsibility for ensuring that all learners promote a safe environment for authentic sharing of individual interpretations and perspectives of the content material. Shaping and correcting of any misinterpretations of the course material or theory must be handled gently with respect for a wide range of valid interpretations and freedom of expression. Lack of student participation and resistance should be determined by exploring and investigating possible "developmental, cultural, and institutional factors" (Taylor, (2006) pg. 95).

### *Learner-Centered Teaching*

Emphasis of learning in relation to teaching is trendy and faddish in higher education issues, but much of the promotional resources lack concrete policies and practices (Weimer, 2002). Most of the discourse in relation to learner-centered teaching remains abstract and fails to get down to the level of detail and application. The highlight of the problem is the common traditional obstacle encountered in every discipline of bridging the gap between research and practice. Appreciative inquiry offers at least one of the tools needed in the building of this bridge. Focus on instructional improvement "cannot be based on the premises of remediation and deficiency" (Weimer, pg. XV).

Instructional improvement that emphasizes addressing "how we learn" and how exploring the learning question can improve teaching invites a positive and productive paradigm for change. Appreciative inquiry encourages change by advocating viewing obstacles as opportunities.

“Authoritarian, directive actions diminish student motivation and ultimately result in dependent learners, unwilling and unable to assume responsibility for their own learning” (Weimer, 2002, pg. xvii). Content can be covered in ways that establish learning skills that can be applied on the job and in society, “creating an awareness of the self as a unique, individual learner” (pg. xviii). Traditional classroom structures foster an imbalance of power through emphasis on competition at the expense of collaboration, instructor dissemination of course content without the participation of student perspective on application, and focus on instructor expertise that disregards the “students in the process of acquiring and retaining information” (Weimer, pg. 13). Instructors aiming at providing a transformative learning experience seek a better balance of knowledge transmission and learning facilitation.

Education produces dependent learners when the teacher is solely in charge of identifying what needs to be learned, prescribing the learning methods, and assessing what and how well students have learned (Weimer, 2002). “The goal of education ought to be the creation of independent, autonomous learners who assume responsibility for their own learning” (pg. 15). Transformational learning requires a paradigm of faculty members who can learn to view themselves as “instructional designers who put together challenging and complex learning experiences and then create environments that empower students to accomplish the goals” (Weimer, pg. 18).

In order to implement Transformational Learning environments it is necessary to take a developmental approach (Weimer, 2002). Faculty and students are both affected by the transformational learning experience at different levels. The challenge is to determine authentically at which state of development each reside and then to construct the learning

environment according to the best dynamics that the synergy of instructor/student can move forward together from the current state. Group dynamics and individual faculty and student relationships will vary to some extent with each class. Each class represents individual dynamics according to personality styles and developmental stages of each student, as well as, each instructor/student interaction.

“Successful response to developmental issues requires a level of knowledge that does not yet exist conceptually or pragmatically” (Weimer, 2002, pg. 183). Understanding developmental dynamics does offer a place to start the implementation of learner-centered teaching. The ability to become more vulnerable, adaptable and flexible is necessary in order to face the challenging chaos of any transformational change.

Transformational learning is not a set of techniques, but a new way of thinking about teaching and learning. Change is best approached as an “activity of intrigue, challenge, frustration, and satisfaction” (Weimer, pg. 189). The number one requirement for innovation, creativity and change is a willingness to move outside of the limitations of the safe and comfortable.

#### *Engaging the Heart with Principles of Spirituality*

Professional cannot mean unemotional, and unfortunately, professional is often used as a defense mechanism that precludes transformational experience and relationships. Anything considered “emotional” tends toward the connotations of oversensitivity and extreme subjectivism. To teach for personal, organizational and social transformation and change requires ways of engaging people’s hearts and spirits along with rationality and critical thinking (Tisdell, 2003). Many educators and social change initiators have been important spiritual leaders as well, for example Gandhi and Martin Luther King.

“Spirituality is one of the ways people construct knowledge and meaning. It works in consort with the affective, the rational or cognitive, and the unconscious and symbolic domains” (Tisdell, 2003, pg. 20). “Spirituality and culture in adult and higher education are always about people’s stories and experiences” (pg. 21). Public demand and interest is currently inspiring spirituality as a hot topic for discussion even in professional and business practice, health care, education and psychology. Spirituality is about wholeness, interconnectedness, mystery and relationship. Spirituality is not necessarily about religion, but it may include religion. Spirituality empowers authenticity, or a greater capacity to establish a sense of self that is not limited by circumstances or other people’s expectations, role definitions or limitations. Spirituality can foster learner motivation by inviting personal interpretations and applications of knowledge.

We are all shaped partially by culture, gender, genetics, various psychological and biological needs and desires, and other’s expectations of us (Tisdell, 2003). In addition to cognition and reasoning, “we construct knowledge and make meaning in powerful and unconscious ways through image, symbol, music, art, metaphor, and ritual” (pg. 34). Educators and managers must find ways to engage the “cognitive, affective, and symbolic domains in the educational process” (pg. 35). “For example, the educator might incorporate critical reading and engagement of new ideas (cognitive domain), consideration of how such ideas relate to one’s life experiences (affective domain), and a space for celebrating and integrating new learning through the use of original or available music, art, poetry, or metaphor (symbolic domain)” (Tisdell, pg. 40).

According to Talmadge Guy (1999), “a principal focus of the educational experience, from the perspective of cultural relevance, is the reconstruction of learners’ group-based

identity from one that is negative to one that is positive” (as cited in Tisdell, 2003, pg. 13). Spirituality may play its part in creating healthier learning group cultures through empowering people with the courage to reveal individual authenticity even in new and temporary group experience. Rabbi Michael Learner (2000) discusses spirituality as a cultivating of a spirit of awe and wonder, the cultivation of mindfulness or awareness and inspiring a love and care for community and world transformation as part of a universal and environmental concern and enhancement (as cited in Tisdell, 2003). The application of spiritual principles in the learning environment can contribute to encouraging and challenging individuals to work together to support each other in discovering, developing, and revealing individual skills, unique talents and participation.

Spirituality and religion may overlap but they remain different (Tisdell, 2003).

“Organized religions have institutionalized components to them – written doctrine, codes of regulating behavior, and organized communities of faith. Spirituality is more about how people make meaning through experience with wholeness, a perceived higher power, or higher purpose” (pg. 47). Information and feeling come together in the forming of images. Transformational teaching may be cultivated by instructing individual learners in identifying and creating meaningful images that relate course content with personal feelings and applications. Imagination facilitates the unconscious knowledge construction process through ritual, image and symbol. “We connect all new forms of knowledge to what is already stored in our memory and use the power of imagination, both to access what we already know and to connect it to the present to create new knowledge” (Tisdell, pg. 65).

The chaos of life can be transformed into harmony through knowledge and application of learning (Tisdell, 2003). Educators and management can learn how to release student/employee "imagination and creativity to see and experience the wholeness of things in order to engage their own deepest problem solving capacities" (pg. 73). The search for individual authenticity and identity has been articulated and hypothesized over through many diverse fields of discipline, such as psychology, philosophy, religion, spirituality, sociology, physics and organizational development. Leaders may facilitate individual expression in the group by providing activities and processes that require individual inner reflection and then outer action in order to communicate the inner reflection in creative communication that the group can understand and assimilate.

Individual inner reflection and expression can help to promote community in the group setting. Greater harmony and collaboration is promoted when each individual feels important, valuable and needed in order for the group to function optimally at its task (Tisdell, 2003). Individual expression integrated into group sharing helps to reveal and expose diverse perspectives and integrated forms of paradox that are confronted in the normal routine of daily functions. It is a generative function to learn to "integrate and live with the openness of the tension of opposites" (Tisdell, 2003, pg. 133). Even though each individual must learn to live out their life purpose in diverse paths, we live in this experience in the group and cultural environment. Learning to function in the world authentically requires that we recognize our own shadow parts of the self so that we do not project false attributes to others. Conversely, we must also learn to identify group shadow projections that we internalize unknowingly, allowing them to limit our own individual creativity and productivity. Rosa Parks represents an individual action that

said “no” to group projection of shadow by refusing to sit at the back of the bus as was dictated by the group norms of her time. The process of claiming an authentic place of self-expression in the world or group involves some learning, unlearning, reframing, integration and transformation.

### *Group Learning*

“By being overly supportive and assuming the role of caretaker, facilitators fail to challenge learners to take responsibility for their own learning” (Imel and Tisdell, (1996), pg. 19). Facilitators of groups can best enhance group collaboration and learning by supporting individual group members in resolving conflict and moving forward in task accomplishments. Reframing issues of conflict is one example of facilitator leadership.

In addition to helping develop knowledge of content, discussion activities also develop leadership skills, summarize group opinion, move the group to consensus, require listening skills, permit learners to handle controversial topics, force participants to use paraphrasing skills, develop self-directed learning skills, and enhance the ability of participants to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate.

(Jacobsen, Eggen, and Kauchek, (1993), as cited in Heimlich, (1996), pg. 44)

In order to lead a group to reason and learn together it is necessary for the facilitator to expose and overcome defensiveness, competition and resistance. Whenever any group of people come together, there is formed a dominant culture that consists of apparent mutual strengths and “invisible norms that people are often measured against, or even unconsciously measure themselves against” (Tisdell, 2003, pg. 168). In order to enhance group relatedness and creativity, each individual must be empowered and encouraged to

express those aspects of the self that may not, at first, be accepted or embraced by the current dominant manifestation of the culture of the group.

Discussion promotes talk and “talk is one of the ways through which human beings make meaning” (Kerka, (1996), pg. 83). “There is no single recipe for a successful group; each one has its own spirit, soul and style” (pg. 84). Discussion promotes “knowledge of texts, of contexts, of self, of others, and of how to read” (pg. 85). “A variety of group process skills are acquired and used during book discussions: gate keeping, diagnosing problems, compromising, harmonizing, building consensus, giving and seeking information, coordinating, recording, and expediting” (Kerka, pg. 85-86).

Group learning has been called active learning and research regarding active learning has been funded through the US Department of Education’s Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) (Bouton and Garth, 1983). College-based learning groups have been observed in an effort to discover common elements that translate to group learning throughout society. Within the workplace and community organizations, learning groups could play a bigger part in growth, creativity, production and organizational development. Trainers or teachers must develop learning activities that enable trainees or students to learn without relying strictly on telling what needs to be known, which is mainly done through lecture and passive learners (Bouton and Rice, 1983). Encouraging more student participation in the learning process can translate into more immediately applicable skills and abilities ready to be practiced in real life experiences and activities.

Developing professional competence requires that students are enabled and prepared to transfer the learning of theory and facts into real life problem solving and professional

roles (Michaelson and Obenshain, 1983). This transfer requires not only contextual knowledge, but also holistic observation, interpersonal and communication skills and empathy in regards to the work collaboration with others required in order to produce an end result or product. Individual learning and production must eventually be communicated to larger groups and processes. "The whole is more than the sum of its parts, because exchange occurs" (Maimon, 1983, pg. 58).

In group learning, learning is accomplished through peer interaction and structured reinforcement activities (Bouton and Garth, 1983). Learners reconstruct what they hear communicated through the facilitator and peers "based on the knowledge, experience, interests, and emotions that the listener brings to the experience" (pg. 76). "Students learn course material by doing something with it – discovering, communicating, organizing, interpreting, applying, and so on" (pg 78). Learners need to practice applications in real life where they must not only solve a problem, but they must also determine what the problem is. Additionally, in order to determine what a problem appears to be, learners must also be able to separate and distinguish what a problem is not. This involves self-reflection and awareness skills.

When instructors are able to present learning as action, they provide students the opportunity to reflect on and articulate what they know. Knowledge is incomplete until we can articulate what we know and communicate it to others (Bouton and Garth, 1983). Discussion amidst peers also allows students to communicate at similar levels of development or understanding. In a strictly instructor led lecture format, instructors may be communicating above the level of ability of the students to understand. As an instructor learns to facilitate instead of dictating learning, the instructor is allowed to

perceive the students level of current understanding by observing the current level of peer discussion. The instructor can then redirect instruction toward current levels of understanding. "The learning group method introduces some real-world complexity into the learning situation" (Bouton and Garth, 1983, pg. 79). Developmental level communication principles are easily applicable to the manager/employee or work group relationships.

Finkel and Monk (1983) describe the instructor/learner situation as the Atlas complex. The Atlas complex is described by the experience of the instructor feeling caught in the middle of the group by a host of mysterious forces, hidden assumptions, hidden expectations, and the consequences of one's own making. The Atlas complex limits effective teaching by paralyzing the instructor with an overwhelming sense of responsibility and blame for anything that appears to not be going well in the classroom. "The very predictability that we need from roles can become so rigid by force of habit that the roles of teacher and student become overly restrictive and actually exclude the usual needs of cognitive life in the classroom" (Finkel and Monk, 1983, pg. 90). Individual instructor's can learn to relinquish the stereotypes, limitations, and expectations that keep them bound by tradition and conventional ignorance. It takes empowerment and encouragement to find the freedom of unique and creative self-expression for both instructors', as well as for students/learners.

Roles and stereotypes tend to lock teachers into choosing between the role of expert or helper (Finkel and Monk, 1983). Freedom and flexibility are cultivated by choosing new definitions that reflect diverse teaching styles required for the diversity of learner groups.

Leaders are expert helpers. Flexibility and adaptability are necessary for creative and sustainable learning environments. Transformational learning calls for the ability to function fully and creatively amidst paradox. Every group experience presents unique challenges, opportunity, potential and possibility. Learning is “an act of construction on the part of the learner” and teaching should not be a “prescribed and unvarying role” (Bouton and Garth, pg. 94). Teaching is a “series of teaching functions or activities whose sequence and emphasis can be varied” (pg. 99). In order to empower new life and creativity in the teaching/learning environment, awareness and change is needed to address existing norms, roles and procedures that limit the creation of more humanized learning and working environments. Effective school research parallels ideas of effectiveness in contemporary organizational literature from business and industry (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988). “The quality of the organizational cultures of businesses are associated with their profitability and morale” (pg. 9).

“Teaching and learning are complementary acts that involve a host of interpersonal processes” (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988). Research by Kuriloff and Atkins (1966) states that projects “in which an industrial work group analyzes its social-emotional processes can enable the group to produce higher economic gains (as cited in Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988, pg. 23). Research from the psychoanalytic perspective suggests that people learn to relate to others along the same emotional styles that they have learned relating within their families. Negative self-esteem or relationships with peers will affect the academic pursuit or the work product and relationships. Psychological compatibility is often a better predictor of group work success than other characteristics such as skill, ability or achievement. All groups will alternate between spending time working through

social-emotional issues and the work task itself. If status and social-emotional issues are avoided the work task will be affected negatively.

A successful individual-group model will process through to maturity of function by cyclical stages (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988). Acceptance and interpersonal trust will allow and encourage group "flow", where the individual is able to begin thinking less about themselves and more about the group. "Students do not directly express their own ideas and opinions publicly until they have learned that their peers and the teacher will not reject them" (pg.46). Group flow opens the door for the group to work collaboratively for the achievement of goals. Open communication empowers the group to develop a comfortable and flexible task structure encouraging freedom, a sense of individual self-control and active participation of each member. Healthy acceptance and flexibility can be created amidst group members when the teacher accepts a variety of student behaviors that allows student's to cautiously reveal parts of themselves. The student's will follow the model of the teacher, rewarding one another for free expression of ideas and flexible collaborative decision making.

The teacher/leader models the intended group structure influencing the students either to move toward formal, routine and impersonal relationships or toward more intimate, challenging, and supportive relationships" (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988, pg. 51). The leader who desires to establish a climate and culture of shared influence and collaborative learning should be prepared for the initial power struggles that have to do with the psychodynamics of dependency, counter dependency, domination and autonomy. In every sector of human life a natural conflict arises over who will make decisions and how things will operate. These conflicts arise "between child and parent, between friends,

between spouses, between groups within a community, and between nation-states” (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988, pg. 52).

DeCharms (as cited in Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988) research showed that motivation and achievement can be enhanced by teacher’s expectations. Using exercises to bolster self-concepts and procedures for stimulating achievement can produce more successful learning behavior. Unexamined cultural norms, role expectations and stereotypes can undermine successful behaviors of learning, as well as, limiting motivation to learn. “Often, interpersonal expectations become so firmly shared and consensual for the members that individual students find it difficult to get the social support needed for making changes in their behaviors” (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988, pg. 82). Our behaviors are determined by our individual attitudes about our selves and about others, our expectations for our selves and others expectations for us, and our intents or goals we expect to produce from our actions.

Leadership is the potential for influencing another person and the ability to lead is an important skill in the development of fulfilling one’s own feelings of self-worth. Leadership abilities satisfy a basic human need for self control or of achieving influence power (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988). Atkinson and Feather (1966) have proposed a useful equation for “organizing some of the psychological facts that are involved in an individual’s attempting leadership . . . according to this equation, the tendency to attempt leadership would be a function of a person’s motive for power, multiplied by an expectation of success in leading, multiplied by an incentive for accomplishment” (as cited in Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988, pg. 108). Teachers or leaders of a learning group can learn to diagnose and use structural changes in the group to instigate and promote

leadership participation from the group. Giving and asking for suggestions, praising suggestions, and through utilizing and integrating these suggestions into the learning structures and processes can encourage leadership. Sharing leadership with students is not abdicating authority; it is a process for teaching learners how to control their behavior and how to influence others for collaborative decision making (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988).

The structures and processes initiated by the leader or teacher of groups can enhance or deter learning. Flexibility and adaptability according to each group's dynamics will allow more accurate diagnosis and intervention strategies to improve each learning culture (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988). Human nature tends toward conformity in the interest of social survival. Most often, even non-conforming behavior is actually still controlled by perceived standards of conformity. True creativity is not rebellion against conformity. True creativity is an expression of unique internal needs and gifts that still allow individual connection with the external social world. "Attraction and hostility toward others, in particular, are built up especially out of messages about oneself that a person perceives as being sent by others" (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988, pg. 153). When leadership supports and initiates norms that support individual differences and autonomy, interpersonal pressures to abide by unhealthy norms of conformity will dissipate and learners will be free to seek their own unique ways to gratify themselves as well as participate socially.

"Negative cycles of interpersonal relations become emotionally vicious when behaviors intended to be benign are seen as negative and, therefore, as confirming the original expectations" (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988, pg. 165). Interpersonal relations

are effected by current moods, expectations, perceptions and past experience. Group learning is enhanced when the social climate is conducive to the view that learning can be a fun and exciting adventure. Past experience and destructive peer relationships will inhibit learning. Negative interpersonal relationships create threatening environments that inhibit cohesiveness, collaboration and achievement. Threatening social environments undermine self-confidence, hinder motivation, reduce ability to face and persist through obstacles and sabotage production and innovation. Group norms are constructive when they address and limit destructive behavior. However, norms themselves can also become destructive when they become inflexible and intolerant of personal freedoms and creative expression (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988).

“The most ideal mix of norms must be tailored for a particular teacher with a particular cluster of students in relation to the subject matter upon which the class is focusing” (Schmuck and Schmuck, pg. 183). A norm can be defined as “an attitude –a predisposition to think, feel, and act in particular ways”, shared by a dominant number of people in a group (pg. 184). Individual norms are diverse and their expression in each group becomes unique. Unclear and unshared norms affect each group. Peer group norms unfold through group interactions. A leader/teacher must become aware of the norms as they unfold and direct them in subtle ways to increase the chances of group learning. Group norms are both psychological and behavioral, affecting perceptions, cognitions and evaluation.

Individual perceptions, behavior and participation can be changed and influenced by perceived and unconscious influences generated by the group dynamics. Individual expressions are modified by internalizing perceived group expectations (Schmuck and

Schmuck, 1988). Educational content cannot be presented with successful learning without taking into consideration the group processes and dynamics of learning.

“Intellectual and emotional development of students occurs more effectively when formal educational goals and a number of the cognitive norms of the informal peer group are consonant” (pg. 188). Too much teaching focuses on content without addressing inquiry and learning processes. “Students appear to pursue learning content most energetically if they are involved along with the teacher in establishing cognitive norms which deal with the process of learning” (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988, pg. 189).

The leader/teacher can direct positive behavior, interaction and participation through “finding avenues for increasing the amounts of positive social reinforcement that are initiated from one student to another” (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988, pg. 190). The tendency for individuals to conform to the pressure of others may be addressed by providing exercises that highlight the value of individual unique expression or that expose the ineffectiveness that can result by superficial allegiance to group pressures caused by the fear of standing out or being different. Discussion can promote feedback that reveals dysfunctional norms and misperceptions regarding peer interactions. “Open sharing allows for widening the range of alternatives for perceptions, cognitions, feelings, and behaviors” (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988, pg. 192). Sharing can also promote agreements for change without imposing change that may become counterproductive through resistance. Interpersonal support will facilitate awareness and willingness for change and learning.

An atmosphere of encouragement and flexibility promotes more interpersonal support than restraint and rigidity (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988). The leader/instructor who is

able to articulate and communicate with a group regarding the ambiguous and unconscious influences in regards to groups and learning will be better able to promote cooperation and participation. It takes patience, skill, creativity and imagination to foster a climate of cooperation and yet cultivating individual uniqueness of expression. The more natural course of leading groups is to promote only one style of leadership, which emphasizes more solely competition, cooperation or individualism and lacks a motivation or knowledge of how to combine these separate processes. Strategies that promote fun and intrinsic motivation must include diverse processes.

Evaluation that is less hierarchical and more democratic through collaboration and mutual accountability promotes a higher level of participation and less anxiety in the learning process (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988). Inviting students to participate in the awareness and assessment of group functioning is empowering and promotes more self-responsibility and initiative for student learning. Formative evaluation "aims to present information about the next steps which should be taken to move closer to a particular goal" (pg. 206). Open discussions regarding group functioning can motivate students to help each other. As the leader/instructor articulates stages of group development and delineates the next goal, students can share perspectives on how to achieve the next stage of development. Student logic and phraseology amongst each other can sometimes allow more understanding and communication at the student level of perspectives. "When members of a classroom are guided by the shared expectations that each person –students and teachers alike- should be developing as individuals and as a group, they will work collaboratively on generating formal procedures to evaluate one another in helpful, growth-enhancing ways" (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988, pg. 207).

“Members of learning groups can gain control over themselves and their own culture through data collection about themselves and group discussion methods” (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988, pg. 208). Leaders can develop teaching strategies and exercises that model behavioral goals for effective learning and group processing. Leaders should continually remain aware of the possibilities in communication, miscommunication and the range of perceptual differences. Striving for authenticity in all communications and interpersonal relationships promotes the most effective communication and learning environment. “Superficiality and the concealment of self in teaching are detrimental to the development of autonomous students and effective classroom communication” (pg. 222).

Defensive and ineffective communication is the result of threatening and superficial environments. “Teachers who communicate their own complex humanity directly by discussing their feelings, and who listen to descriptions of students’ feelings, have a good chance of engaging students in effective dialogue” (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988, pg. 223). Defensive communication is covert and ambiguous and can be eliminated through actively promoting clear, obvious, and easily understood, authentic communication. Communication is naturally multilevel dialogue because it contains “different levels of feelings, motives, thoughts, and intentions” simultaneously transmitted between senders and receivers (pg. 223).

Leaders should remain alert for opportunities to identify and discuss issues that lurk below the surface of communication (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988). “When hidden psychic processes and idiosyncratic perceptions are brought into the open for discussion, they can be worked on through group problem solving. A classroom group that delves

into subsurface levels increases its freedom to improve itself" (pg. 224). Common themes of subsurface conflict include spoken and unspoken messages, surface and hidden intentions, work related emotional motivators or obstacles, and task related maintenance functions. "Public recognition of communication patterns is the first step toward making constructive changes" (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988, pg. 225).

There are many techniques, tools and skills that can be used as facilitators for authentic learning, but they can be used inappropriately when they become ends in themselves or valued for their own sakes at the expense of deterring authenticity (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988). Every leader must develop self-knowledge and self-awareness in order to determine leadership styles and tools that most effectively allow them to remain authentic. Awareness allows one to define clearly the level of current functioning and ability in relation to what is possible. Nonjudgmental evaluation is an ongoing deliberate effort to avoid personal and character assassinations, in both personal and in student evaluation. Awareness and nonjudgmental evaluation creates a sense of possibility and enthusiasm for making new choices and changes. Paraphrasing, describing behavior, describing feelings, checking impressions, clarifying perspective and seeking feedback are essential learning and evaluation tools.

True, authentic dialogue naturally feels unsafe and exposes a sense of vulnerability, because it opens us to value judgments and criticism from others. It is also unpredictable and spontaneous, leaving us with less perceived control. Leaders desiring to create transformational learning environments must be prepared for the conflict and chaos that is a natural aspect of any change effort. A culture for transformational learning requires deliberate, conscious effort to promote trust and empathy. "Regular and stable

communicative patterns develop over time between people, within groups, and within organizations. Along with interpersonal expectations, leadership hierarchies, friendship constellations, and group norms, we can speak of such regularized communication as culture” (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988, pg. 238). Open, honest communication requires focused awareness and assertive change in a context of the growing alienation and defensiveness currently present in our organizational cultures and society.

Open and honest communication starts through becoming aware of the legitimate diversity of individual perceptions, motivations, intentions and behavior. Change begins, not by coming to agreement or by judging right and wrong, but by understanding what, why and how different people think. “One simply cannot avoid conflict when people come together in groups to work and learn” (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988, pg. 248). Conflict is an inevitable fact of life, living, and human relations; but we can be “prepared to guide and direct the energy that adheres to conflict in constructive and educational ways” (pg. 248). Conflict can actually become a source and motivation for learning as individuals and groups seek information for problem solving and conflict resolution, which requires skills for reasoning and critical thinking. Intrinsic motivation for learning can be nurtured because all human organisms seek resolution when confronted by paradox, disequilibrium, dissonance and conflict. Conflict requires self-confrontation when the individual experiences “different conceptual schemes simultaneously and is energized to develop his or her own unique version of the issue” (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988, pg. 254).

Diversity education would become more effective if it included not only the current traditional issues regarding race, ethnicity and culture, but also expanded

conceptualization and confrontation to include diversity issues regarding individual differences regarding procedures, processes, goals, concepts, opinions and styles of interpersonal relationship. Self-interest is a powerful motivator. Organizational and group processes that can identify and satisfy individual motivation needs through self-interest will be more effective, productive and creative.

An environment of cooperation and collaboration is more conducive to motivating individual self-interest than an environment of competition, control and inflexibility. Research conducted by Deutsch (1973) found that conflict was enhanced by competition and minimized or eradicated in cooperative situations (as cited in Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988). "Individuals in cooperative groups, in contrast to the competitive groups, showed more 1) effective member communication, 2) friendly and helpful behavior, 3) coordination of effort, 4) division of labor, 5) orderliness, and 6) task orientation" (pg. 258).

Conflict, organizational effectiveness and group learning can all become enhanced by clearing misperceptions and stereotypes (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988). Self-interest does not necessarily produce "selfishness", in fact, when self interest needs are accommodated for, selfishness tends to decrease. Cooperative and collaborative working environments can be the most effective. Hierarchical, competitive and rigidly controlled environments are not effective or productive in the long term. Individuals are more willing to cooperate, collaborate, and even give up something in order to have at least some of their self-interest needs met. Inefficient organizations ignore, suppress and use conflict destructively. "Conflicts are resolved constructively when all parties get something they want" (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988, pg. 260). It takes more "discipline"

to collaborate and cooperate than it does to dictate and control. Discipline is not punishment; it is guidance, direction, correction, protection and facilitation.

Authority figures in general, and leaders/teachers specifically are in power positions that affect those who are in their realm of responsibility and authority. Accepting each individual as a unique human being, with idiosyncratic strengths and weaknesses, goes a long way toward reducing bias, stereotype and alienation (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988). Leaders can model patterns of support that allow individuals to expand strengths, overcome shortcomings and develop self-respect. Organizational practices and structures can be developed that create healthier environments that address the spirit, soul and body needs of humanity. Vision, courage, compassion, empathy and a commitment to life-long learning are attributes necessary for transformational leadership.

Hierarchical organization structures create passivity, feelings of incompetence and foster a lack of willingness for collaboration, cooperation and participation (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988). Equalized power relationships and organizational structures increase initiative, collaboration, cooperation innovation, creativity, participation and feelings of empowerment and responsibility. The informal organizational climate can be determined and efforts for growth and improvement must begin at the level of current functioning. Three aspects of the informal organizational climate that are key aspects of influence on the level of functioning are "the quality of trust and openness of the staff, norms held by the staff members about the nature of human motivation, and the skills of communication and constructive openness exhibited by the staff" (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988, pg. 284).

A context of trust and openness encourages self-esteem, friendliness, empowerment and student/teacher rapport and collaboration. "Feelings of hostility, competition, or alienation among staff members may lead to anxiety and low levels of tolerance with their students" (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988, pg. 285). Group processes in the classroom are influenced by the overall informal culture of the total organization. Staff views on human behavior and individual motivation will affect teacher/student interaction. Theories regarding motivation for work and learning range from the view that individuals are passive, lazy and need constant supervision/control to viewing individuals as self-motivated, active, and curious/eager to produce high quality work and learning. Evaluation, learning processes and interpersonal interactions are all influenced by the beliefs and assumptions regarding human behavior and the best organizational structures assumed to be necessary to guide this behavior. Skills must be developed involving communication and perceptual openness in order to create climates that are adaptable, flexible and proactive rather than reactive.

Constructive openness is "feedback which guides recipients supportively toward new alternatives" in conceptualization, behavior and competence without threatening or destructively sabotaging self-esteem and productivity (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988, pg. 286). Group processes require a supportive social and emotional atmosphere in order to reduce the frustration and anxiety that is produced when a wide range of individual skills, needs and preferences must be addressed and paradoxically resolved. Kurt Lewin theorizes that individual behavior is linked by the interaction of perceptions of the environment and a person's personality structure. Innovation refers to the "capacity to accept, adapt, restructure and reject" new ideas (pg. 289). Organizations can become

more aware of their internal processes and dynamics in order to foster growth and change. Organizational Development skills and initiatives empower the people inside the "system" to assess, diagnose and transform their organizational structures by offering designs and processes that individually customize and capitalize on the latent human potential underutilized in the current climate or culture of the organization.

Organizational Development plans and programs facilitate identifying and understanding the current subtle dynamics and interrelationships both within the current system of organization and the environmental and cultural influences surrounding and interacting with the system; uncovering conflicts and confusions that remain currently unidentified; improving communication and problem solving; and providing motivational ideas that invite and include the individual contributions of creativity and innovation from all participants at all levels (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988). The approach of appreciative inquiry facilitates recognition and affirmation of current successes and achievement and discovering ideas and processes for expanding these current resources and developing collaborative alternatives, which may provide further innovation, adaptability, flexibility, creativity and diversity (French, Bell and Zawacki, 1994). Successful organizational development requires participants to receive information and encouraging education on the value of change, the possibilities inherent in creative chaos, the value of exposing and dialoguing diverse and paradoxical positions and perspectives; and the possibilities for expanding individual satisfaction and fulfillment within the organization. Participants should be provided with a wide variety of ideas for improvement that allows individual freedom of choice for implementation and application. Personality styles and idiosyncratic creativity should be accommodated for increasing dynamic results.

Tolerance for diversity and individuality can be increased. Collaborative action research, simulations and games can inspire the spirit of adventure in the organizational development process.

The challenge of involving students in a more dynamic and collaborative learning process often stimulates frustration and disappointment regarding the seemingly low amount of interest from the students and lack of skill experienced on both the part of teachers and students in working together (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988). We must not let this disappointment sabotage optimistic vision or efforts for change. Challenging traditional theories and styles of learning is a major initiative that will require patience, perseverance, optimism, vision and endurance, as well as, a "considerable amount of planning, training, and relearning about the responsibility of a student in relation to faculty members" (pg. 300).

It will take time to change traditional hierarchical structures of learning and management, but the time spent will be well worth the effort. Traditionally passive students can become fully functioning, independent team members that will carry new skills of collaborative learning into work organizations, enhancing and building creative and innovative organizational work cultures benefiting American society in general. "In a like manner, teachers need to develop skills, norms, and structures to support new ways of interacting with students" (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988, pg. 300). The teacher/student relationship can become a program of change providing a virtual experience for developing leaders for our future that are empowered and equipped to develop people, processes and cultures that can create healthier global organizations.

The current teacher/student paradigm is only one indicator of the complexity and possibility that group processes present for enhancing outcomes and productivity for individual human and organizational development (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988). There are vast amounts of human potential that remain untapped and underutilized in all collective organizational organisms. Understanding group processes may have direct impact on such diverse areas, such as crime, delinquency, individual physical and mental health, and economic productivity. People, process and culture issues affect every arena of society. Inspirational and motivational ideals must be backed and implemented by the hard work and realistic application of interventions that adapt visionary hypothesis and theories to the specific contexts of the individuals that form the human organizations that we all participate in. Action plans must be flexible and adaptable in order to accommodate for the obstacles that will be encountered when theory is applied to each specific situation. Social and emotional supports can be planned for in advance in order to curtail the fragmentation, dissipation and frustration that should be expected in attempting any long-term effort at making transformational changes. Sustained human and organizational growth requires that organizations plan ahead for sustaining individual motivation and momentum.

Organizational processes can easily slip into deadening routine (French, Bell and Zawacki, 1994). Change initiatives commonly remain motivational hype without any substantial implementation. Apathy, frustration and lack of physical and mental resources are the enemies of growth and creativity. Goals, plans and change can only be accomplished through the recognition and planning for the perpetual cycle of obstacles that will be encountered. Action plans can be created to continually develop and infuse

new ideas, resources, energy and motivation into our programs and organizations. Every organization should develop and maintain these plans and processes for continual renewal, learning and growth. A renewal plan should include evaluation and monitoring of the organization's culture and climate, a force-field analysis defining obstacles and resources, problem-solving strategies, continual communication training, benchmark monitoring and brainstorming procedures for cultivating a steady supply of new ideas. Organizational health involves educating and monitoring a broad range of topic areas including "the self and the organization, living our lives in organizations, roles in groups and norms in groups" (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1988, pg. 310). Communication training is an ongoing process for developing healthier organizations and includes developing skills for paraphrasing, non-judgmental behavior descriptions, feeling description, impression checking, empathy and understanding perspective diversity.

#### *Spirituality as an Integrating Framework*

Including the concept of spirituality in education and management provides a context for empowering transformation and passion into learning and people processes. The role of spirituality invites social transformation, cultural relevancy, and human and organizational development to unite in a quest to live and work in freedom and authenticity (Tisdell, 2003). A spiritually grounded pedagogy provides a framework for safety, security, trust and openness. The goal of spirituality is to enhance and liberate individual potential even in the context of a collective organization or group. "The engagement of people's passion is generally not only about critical reflection or "rational discourse", it is also about engaging people's heart and souls, as well as their minds" (pg. 188).

“We don’t think our way into a new kind of living; we live our way into a new kind of thinking” (Tisdell, 2003, pg. 188). Spirituality helps us to live in paradox. Spirituality guides group processes, highlighting and reconciling “the dialectical and paradoxical relationship of the individual and the communal” (pg. 190). Spirituality guides us in providing an environment of transformative power.

Spirituality is 1) about wholeness and connection through the mystery of a Life-force or divine presence, 2) about meaning-making, 3) about moving toward greater authenticity, 4) different from religion, though sometimes interrelated, 5) about symbolic and often unconscious processes often made more concrete in art forms such as music, visual art, image, symbol, and ritual that are manifested culturally, 6) always present (though often unacknowledged) in the learning environment, and 7) connected to significant peak experiences of a Life-force or divine presence that most often happen by surprise. (Tisdell, 2003, pg. 190-191)

When we are empowered to function in our given roles authentically we invite and empower others, not to copy us, but to find and express their own individuality. “If we are trying to invite participants in a learning activity into their own authenticity, we need to be authentic in who we are, and not try to imitate who someone else is” (Tisdell, 2003, pg. 192). Authenticity promotes ways of choosing to live and act that cannot be bought and sold in the marketplace or simply imitated by following another person’s identity. Authenticity is growth and change and individual seeking and learning. Authenticity promotes and invites risk taking, self-exploration, and formation of personal opinion and perspective identification and formation. We learn from others but we make our learning uniquely our own.

Communal education is relational as well as cognitive. We cannot apply theory successfully to real-life situations without understanding the complexity of the interconnectedness and uniqueness of each specific situation (Whitehead, 1933). Attending to the spiritual is not to necessarily talk about spirituality specifically, but it “does mean honoring the various dimensions of how people learn and construct knowledge by facilitating activities that include attention to the affective, the somatic, the spiritual, or symbolic, as well as the cognitive, and encouraging learners to do the same in their presentations” (Tisdell, 2003, pg. 194). We can cultivate an atmosphere or set the tone for safety and encourage diverse and creative expression of the material that needs to be learned. We can create environments that celebrate and enhance the learning process through activities that invite discussion, raise consciousness, stimulate awareness, introduce fun and humor, foster creativity and imagination, connect purpose, expand ideas and brainstorm applications.

“Emancipatory education consists of “having participants take some responsibility for their own learning, use their particular talents and expertise, and discover their own increased capacity for making changes happen as they connect with others” (Tisdell, 2003, pg. 213). A more holistic approach to learning that highlights the interconnectedness of all things is the most likely to be transformational. Awe, wonder and an element of surprise invite the intrigue and mystery that inspire meaningful learning. Powerful learning experiences hold many similarities in common with what many describe as spiritual experiences that bring together and combine such principles as “rationality and affect, theory and practice, passion and possibility, pain and transformation, symbol and ritual” and levels of authentic and vulnerable interaction not

commonly experienced (pg. 225). Such experiences often produce “healing, new insight, greater understanding and a shared sense of community” (Tisdell, 2003, pg. 226).

Most of us naturally fear exposing the vulnerability required in order to be truly authentic.

A spiritually grounded approach to culturally relevant education in higher education is partly about teaching with developmental intention around facilitating learner’s greater authenticity, and that affirms and attends to their cultural identity and spirituality, and that attends to their critical thinking about the subject matter of the course. (Tisdell, 2003, pg. 241)

The teacher/leader can learn to adapt and reach each student at his or her individual level of development. Relating course content to current life application facilitates individuality, learning and retention. Personal relevancy helps to engage passion. “If knowledge engages one’s passion, it activates more energy to create change in one’s personal and professional life, in one’s community, and in the world” (Tisdell, 2003, pg. 241).

Understanding how individual development and spirituality relate and unfold in the lives of multicultural and multiperspective groups helps to produce cultures and climates in the education and work environment that facilitates authenticity, engages passion, invokes creativity and increases the likelihood of collaboration and production. History teaches us that all systems of organization have a natural tendency in their structures to produce oppression, even in the organized systems of religion (Whitehead, 1933). Consideration and application of the principles of spirituality can help to guide us in eliminating or reducing the aspects of organization that produce oppression. The

principles of spirituality imply suggestions for building a sense of “community and brotherhood” into structures of organization.

Spirituality encourages critical thinking in the correlation and emphasis promoted through creating a balance between inner reflection and outer action. Critical thinking correlates with the idea of inner reflection. Mathew Fox (1996) discusses and advocates the idea of reinventing the concept of work to include an integration of spirituality that will encourage a consciousness of living one’s life purpose through connecting our spiritual and cultural selves with doing meaningful work in the world (as cited in Tisdell, 2003). The framework of spirituality offers ideas for integrating and satisfying the needs of the individual in the context of community and organization, promoting both healthier individuals and more effective organizations.



### Chapter III: Discussion

#### *Conclusion & Recommendations*

History reveals that negative repercussions continually appear as a result of a lack of balance between group functioning and individualism (Miller & Carroll, 2006). Abuse of drugs that alter consciousness and the consequences in society reach back beyond even written records. The history of resistance to new ideas and shifts in paradigms of scientific and educational practices reach just as far back. Unfortunately, a common denominator throughout history has been the lack of holistic correlations and well-researched science finding its way into common application and practice. "Albert Einstein wrote that any serious scientist becomes convinced that a spirit is manifest in the laws of the Universe – a spirit vastly superior to that of man, and one in the face of which we with our modest powers must feel humble" (as cited in Link, 1988). Humility and a willingness to face the pains of change required for maturing are required in individuals, organizations, and in our efforts to establish healthier social practices. Habits of practice, even when backed by well-researched suggestions for change, take time and a focus of priority for the diffusions of innovation to come into widespread application.

Societal problems contribute to violence and self-medicating forms of escape and drug abuse (Miller & Carroll, 2006). Education is in a position to recognize and change inherent inadequacies in its theory and applications in order to address human needs in general. Education affects all areas of society that include our daily lives and organizational environments. Inadequate educational strategies contribute to human social problems "that sometimes express themselves in the troublesome use of alcohol or drugs" (pg. 6). A recent brain imaging study conducted with monkeys suggests the

critical role the environment plays in determining even individual genetic expression (Childress, 2006). A healthy environment can reshape individual traits. The experiences of achieving mastery or "leadership" in a group setting reshaped biological risk factors in monkeys into traits of protection.

A dean of American psychiatry, Dr. Karl Menninger (as cited in Link, 1988 ), expresses the concern of our collective irresponsibility through our disregard for social concerns such as poverty, mental illness, pollution and industry disregard of the needs of the individual spirit, soul and body within our organizations and society in general. We can always improve. Suggestions for continual improvement in human growth and development can begin with simply the development of awareness. We cannot possibly make reasoned choices about what we can improve if we do not have a clear understanding of our current level of knowledge and skills in practice; compared to the exploration of what is possible. Collective irresponsibility begins to change only with each individual.

We are each a unique contribution to our world. We can seek and give input that remains a continuing deliberate effort to avoid personal or character judgments; both towards our individual self and towards others. Suggestions to achieve a nonjudgmental evaluation might include asking others to describe how we perform in the area we are most interested in evaluating or improving. Ask others to describe how what you do affects them. Ask others to suggest additional ideas for accomplishing the tasks and goals you desire to achieve. We retain the freedom to make the final implementing choices. If we first have awareness about who we are, our current level of functioning, the destinations we seek; we will gain a much better sense of what we can honestly

change. We may legitimately decide not to change. But we might consider alternative possibilities of changing surrounding activities.

If we cannot express ourselves well in any area, we can participate in action research through individual or group reading, work and research. Learning to express and articulate to ourselves the content, facts, and theory of what we want or need to know will help in preparing to share and express ourselves among others. We will then be able to communicate what we have learned to others and we will be able to apply your learning into our life circumstances. We must practice, experiment, and rehearse our words and thoughts in order to express ourselves clearly. The inability to express what we have learned will result in an inefficient use of our time, money and efforts.

The authors, speakers, and teachers from whom we learn the most, are not the one's who teach us something we do not already know, but the one's who help us take a truth or theory with which we have studied, helps us to give it expression, and enables us to communicate and apply the learning. We are each a unique and special contribution to our world.

Most schools of thought or new theory development takes place in the context of dynamic creativity and flexibility. Unfortunately, through the passing of time and the varieties of application, there is a tendency for loss of the original dynamics of the creativity and flexibility that brought forth the original development of theory. The school of thought or theory tends to be turned into exclusivism, dogmatism and rigidity; which reduces efficacy in applications to real life circumstances. Applications tend to require a continuous adjustment and regeneration in order to retain efficacy.

The reasons for the tendency to deterioration of efficacy over time are not yet well researched. Contributing factors might be hypothesized from diverse realms of thinking and may include propositions from the physical sciences as to the tendencies even in nature towards deterioration and fossilization; the tendency to compartmentalization without contemporaneous adjustment of contributing factors that make up the "whole"; limited thinking patterns that develop due to misinterpretations and inappropriate applications; and lack of adjustment and flexibility for changes in the dynamics of each particular situation of application. The trained specialist must be able to apply critical thinking skills in order to identify the discrepancies between the internal and foundational principles of theory as compared to the dynamics in application.

Critical thinking asks us to examine assumptions and to learn to view issues through multiple perspectives. Limiting assumptions and narrow perspective taking can be a result of tradition, culture, group norms and habit. Habits of mind can be both beneficial and detrimental. Habits of mind are detrimental when we stop examining an issue and act strictly out of habit for the sake of ease and saving time. On the other hand, if we had to think through the every issue in our daily lives we would never be able to accomplish anything. It is common for us to think that well-established programs or routine represent the best way and the ultimate truth. This is not always the case. One of the benefits we can gain from the idea of spirituality is a more holistic process of critical thinking and application. For instance, many other cultures are more aware of the mind/body connection in the formulation of procedures for mental and physical health and intervention.

We can cultivate our abilities to reach a point where we are not limited by an over-dependence on external "authority", traditional supports or cultural directives through a journey of personal discovery and education. Whatever we are to accomplish in our personal development we will have to achieve by embracing our unique individuality. The development of a deeper capacity of awareness and self-reflection requires personal exploration and discovery and is a precondition for any significant change. Ira Progoff (1963) states: "Depth psychology is a valuable source. It's experience in healing neurosis by working toward wholeness has led to a variety of practical procedures. These procedures provide a perspective in which we can chart a program of personal discipline by which to establish a new atmosphere of inward reality" (pg. 78). Progoff states that such a program contains three main components:

- 1) Regular face-to-face consultations in a dialogue relationship to explore and evoke the individuality of the psyche. This need not be a specific counseling relationship, but any type of personal interactions where we are comfortable enough to discuss these issues.
- 2) The maintenance of a psychological workbook (journal) in which to keep a continuing record of all the varied contents and encounters on the depth level of experience.
- 3) Participation in group workshops in which experiences can be shared with other individuals who have embarked on the path of personal growth, and in which group techniques can be used by a competent leader for developing greater sensitivity and a recognition of the symbolic dimension. I see education as an avenue that can fulfill this human need.

According to the book "The Wisdom Within" written by Roger Mills and Elsie Spittle (2001), if we can gain an understanding of how the principles of mind, consciousness and thought work we can begin to reshape our lives and the organizations that we are involved with. Including principles of spirituality into our living and working is one way that we individually and personally gain an understanding of the way our own mind, consciousness and thoughts work together and affect those around us. Many of us do not realize that we can change the quality of our lives by changing our thinking. Because thinking is an automatic function we fail to realize that we can take control of our thoughts. By taking control of our thinking we can change our emotions and our perceptions. Changing emotions and perceptions assists us in making authentic and lasting changes in behavior. The first task of education should be to protect the offering of free time to understand ourselves and our world a little better (Nouwen, 1986). The Latin word "schola" means free time. Our mind is made up of more than our analytical reasoning and thought patterns ingrained from experience and outside influences. Our mind also contains the wisdom of our personal psyche and our potential individual contributions to our world, including the path to their unfoldment and manifestation in our lives. Individually and collaboratively we can cultivate living each day with passion and authenticity, fulfilling individual human potential through the unique contributions we bring to the world.

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