Imparting Spiritual Intelligence Curriculum in our Classrooms

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Abstract:

Intelligence, as a field of study in psychology and education has been studied enormously. However, its vast scope and untapped dimensions has led the experts to go through another concept namely, Spiritual Intelligence. This paper proposes the essence of Spiritual Intelligence along with the components of its curriculum required in our classrooms. The methods to be implied are also discussed in purview of the research carried out in the field of Intelligence; particularly Spiritual Intelligence. A holistic model of spiritual education is described in which deep personal growth is viewed as the core process of not only spiritual education, but also of general education at its finest.

Key Words: Spiritual Intelligence, Curriculum, Education, Teacher, Schools

Introduction

> *"Spiritual Intelligence is the expression of innate spiritual qualities through your thoughts, actions and attitude"*:
> Brahmakumari Shivani

Over the past century, the concept of intelligence has made an evolutionary leap. Early cognitive research to define intelligence was driven by quantitative measurement and

assessment. The goal was to objectively describe cognitive development and to scientifically define intelligence through establishing predictable empirical stages of advancement (Gardner 1983; Goleman 1997; Wolman 2001). The notion of Intelligence Quotient (IQ) became the scientific benchmark to profile a learner's intellectual capacities and educational possibilities. Towards the end of the 20th century, a number of cognitive scientists rebelled against the notion of a universal IQ standardization, for there is no objective and standardized assessment system to definitely measure an individual's intelligence.

Howard Gardner as leader at the forefront explored through research that each learner has a matrix of intellectual tendencies and a distinctive configuration of these intelligences (Gardner 1983; 1993; 2001) Gardner defined seven multiple intelligences that are interconnected and interrelated.

Defining Spiritual Intelligence

Spiritual Intelligence is a term used to indicate spiritual correlate to IQ and EQ (Emotional Quotient). Like EQ, spiritual Quotient (SQ) is becoming more mainstream in scientific inquiry and philosophical/ psychological discussion. Author *Stephen Covey*, observes SI as "the central and most fundamental of all the intelligences, because it becomes the source of guidance for the other[s]..." Howard Gardner, chose not to include SI amongst his "intelligences" due to the challenge of codifying quantifiable scientific criteria. Instead, he suggested an "existential intelligence" as viable.

David B. King (2007) defines Spiritual Intelligence (SI) as a set of adaptive mental capacities based on non-material and transcendent aspects of reality. King further proposes four core abilities of capacities of SI:

1. Critical Existential Thinking: the capacity to critically contemplate the nature of existence, reality, the universe, space, time and other existential/metaphysical issues.

2. Personal Meaning Production: the ability to derive personal meaning and purpose from all physical and mental experiences

3. Transcendental Awareness: the capacity to identify transcendent dimensions/ patterns of the self, of others and of physical world.

4.Conscious State Expansion: the ability to enter and exit higher states of consciousness(e.g. pure consciousness, cosmic consciousness, unity) and the other states of trance at ones' own discretion(as in meditation, prayer etc.).

Zohar & Marshall (2000) has sought to explicitly define spiritual Quotient (SQ). They observe that computers can have a high IQ, some animals have a high EQ, but only human have SQ. Spiritual Intelligence is the cognitive force from which humans address and solve problems of meaning and value and thus, reflectively assess which course of action is more meaningful than another.

Understanding Spiritual Intelligence: Being Spiritual, Having Intelligence

Being Spiritual: To be 'spiritual' is to think, act and interact from an awareness of self as spirit not form, soul not body. Most of us are taught to believe our physical forms. This wrong sense of self is what creates all fear, anger and sadness in life. From a spiritual point of view these emotions are always the result of ego (misidentification), which then blocks access to one's true spiritual nature which is peaceful, loving and joyful.

Having Intelligence: Intelligence is to use, what you know in the right way at the right time, in the right place with the right intention. For example if you 'know' yourself as a spiritual being you will also 'know' that you do not own or possess anything. When something in your life is damaged or lost, it does not affect you in any way--you are able to use your spiritual power to accept and move on.

What is the difference between Spiritual Intelligence and Spirituality?

Spirituality is to 'know' who you are and Spiritual Intelligence is to 'realize' who you are and to live life in that awareness. Spirituality is the knowledge of our self as spirit/soul and the understanding of our highest spiritual qualities and attributes, which are love, peace, purity and bliss.

Being spiritual means the ego has dissolved, virtue has been restored to character and spiritual values connect your inner and outer worlds. It is the ability to transcend all the false identities of race, colour, gender, nationality, profession and religion. It is in this awareness that we are then able to recognize and connect with the supreme power.

Conceptualization of Curriculum

Curriculum is conceptualized according to the perspectives of various curriculum developers e.g. students, teachers and experts. Curriculum can be portrayed in a number of ways, for instance, precise or obscure, narrow or open, traditional or contemporary in nature. Derived from the Latin "*currere*", denoting both running and race track, concepts of curriculum provide the bases for understanding and contextualizing soulful learning experiences.

Conceptualising Curriculum for Becoming Spiritually Intelligent

Fowler (1981) proposed a model for the development of faith in children, which he based on the theories of Piaget and Erickson; as well as his own research with young people. Fowler's 4 stages are (*Psychology for Educators 2005):*
1. **Early Childhood:** Intuitive Protective Faith. In this stage, children make sense of religious ideas and symbols by embellishing them with their imaginations. In other words, they don't know, they make up.
2. **Middle Childhood:** Mythic-Literal Faith: Children in this stage tend to accept the religious ides they are given by parents and their descriptions and explanations are tied to concrete realities rather than abstract notions. From a Piagetian perspective, they are limited by their concrete operational thinking.
3. **Adolescence:** Synthetic Conventional Faith: Here comes the ability to think about abstract ideas in relation to religion. Nevertheless, individuals still accept the religious doctrines of their families.
4. **Late Adolescence /Adulthood:** Individuative-Reflective Faith: This stage occurs when individuals critically analyze their religious beliefs & recognize the historical, social &

politics forces that have shaped organized religions. Here some young people may reject mainstream religions in favour of cult religions.

For educational pioneers such as Pestalozzi, Montessori & Steiner, children's questions are valued & become the center of the curriculum. This orientation is echoed by more recent writers who call for schools to become places for the development of spirituality & not just accumulation of knowledge, facts & figures (Egan 2001; Glazer 1999).

Methods of Imparting SI Curriculum

Spiritual Intelligence refers to various skills and abilities that empower you to live in harmony with your highest values and move unswervingly towards your life goals **(HEART)**

- with a **Heart** that is open and flexible,
- with **Enthusiasm**,
- with **Awareness** of one's present experience and of the presence of the divine,
- with **Respect** for and service to others and the world, and
- guided by the **Traditions** of your highest values and ethics.

The curriculum for SI may offer a variety of educational services including classes and individual and group instruction via live meetings, teleconference and other electronic formats. It may include publication and distribution of course materials, articles, print and electronic books about SI and its application to various problems in human growth and development. Further a range of practices may be used that promote the human potential including mindfulness, spiritual meditation, study of spiritual texts and spiritual guidance.

The **Center for Spiritual Intelligence, Pennsylvania** run programmes for nurturing the soul, which is an interactive program. This course teaches the basic skills of mindfulness meditation, through the following lessons:

Introduction to mindfulness; practicing meditation; Body awareness and awareness of God; Embodying of the Divine Name; Thoughts, Impulses and Imagination; Teachings on

mental experience; Dealing with difficulties and distractions in Prayer and Meditation.

Spiritual Intelligence can be developed relatively independently through inquiry and practice. Spiritual experiences may also contribute to its development, depending on the context and means of integration.

Role of Schools: Making Student's Spiritually Intelligent

The new role of the teacher is to become a moral philosopher. Need is sometimes felt of having a Spiritual Education Teacher or Religious Education Teacher to develop moral intelligence, spiritual intelligence, moral values & spiritual values in our students. Since *spirituality develops out of morality,* hence it's the prime responsibility of the teachers to identify Spiritually Intelligent students in the classroom.

Characteristics of students gifted with Spiritual Intelligence

- Could possess a definite image of god in their imagination.
- Have an interest in reading and understanding sacred Scripture or Holy texts.
- Enjoy spiritual discussion.
- Show an interest in religious art, music dance or poetry.
- Express a need to meditate.

Spirituality shapes our actions and is directly related to our values and ethical behaviour (Chittenden 2003: 16). Schools need to identify and promote appropriate behaviour. Spirituality also needs to be reflected in a teacher's everyday role. Teachers have an obligation to inculcate in their students positive values which reflect sound ethical and moral judgement, as inherent spiritual dimensions of education. They need to assist students to confront the vicissitudes of life. Before they connect with the lives of their students, teachers need to be cognizant of and connect with their own lives and their inner world. The values of respect and tolerance should be reflected in a school's mission statement.

Best (2000) notes that the spirituality of young people can be developed in many ways: for example, by religion,

thinking, prayer, meditation and ritual. For this to occur in schools, teachers need to embed their notion of spirituality in their subject work programs. Schools can consider the development & implementation of spiritually intelligent curriculum in a cross- curricular approach, with a child centred focus designed to develop the uniqueness of each child.

Conclusion

"May all beings be happy, May all beings live in peace."

The Education Commission (1964-66) recommended that "[E]ducation should be developed so as to increases productivity, achieve social and national integration, accelerate the process of modernization and cultivate social, moral and spiritual values."

In the book **"Education and Spirituality"** Ramon Gallegos Nava speaks that for holistic education there is a need to develop spirituality in students. Holistic educator should be clear that spirituality is experiencing secular, religious belief; spirituality makes us aware, religion makes us dependent and unconscious. The concept of spiritual intelligence is known at least 2500 years ago, when the **Buddha called insight or Vipassana**, pointed to the penetrative vision capability to understand the profound reality of the phenomena.

In his dissertation Ramon Gallegos argues that "Spiritual intelligence enables us to discern that we are living a human experience but we are spiritual beings, we have Buddha nature, there is a fundamental vision of our nature as truth-consciousness-bliss". Spiritual intelligence follow the principles that allow us to understand that love is better than hate, it is better than evil, knowledge is better than ignorance, it is better to give than to receive, peace is better than violence, attention is better than neglect, happiness is better than suffering and recognize that we are spiritual beings. With the philosophical basis of these principles, there needs to be a commitment, on the part of teachers and leaders, to understand and permeate the spiritual dimensions of education into their respective school cultures.

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