Cultivating the Spirit through Resilience: Vision of Effective Schools and Mission of Caring Teachers

Paper submitted by

Dr. K. Abdul Gafoor,
Reader,
Department of Education,
University of Calicut,
gfr.abdul@yahoo.co.in

&

Neena.K.Kottalil,
Research Fellow,
Department of Education,
University of Calicut

For
National Seminar on
Spiritual Intelligence – A paradigm for Holistic Development among Learners

At

N.S.S Training College, Changanassery

(2011, July 21-22)

Abstract: Arguing that education, as being practiced today is generally fearful of spirituality, and that real education ought to cultivate inner lives in an integrated way; this paper put forwards a way for integrating spirituality to everyday life of schools in secular societies. It explores the meaning of spirituality, spiritual intelligence, and spiritual development pertinent to the educational practice and compares them with factors that were identified from resiliency research. It identifies factors that nurture both spirituality and resilience. This opens a way for teachers and other educational practitioners for integrating experiences that will lead to strengthen inner life of children, with an obvious secular goal of making children succeed despite their adversities.

Cultivating the Spirit via Resilience: Vision of Effective Schools and Mission of Caring Teachers

Introduction

The dilemma depicted by Linda (2002) in 'What would you answer if a first grader asks you "Where did my grandmother go when she died?" is a recognition that education of young people involved not only their intellectual, emotional, and social development but also their spiritual growth. Development of every aspect of the life of children to their fullest potential is in the interest of every society. Society seems to broadly agree on the fundamental tasks of education. Role of education surely extend beyond helping the young people stay out of trouble and achieve academic competence. How best to prepare children of 21st century to be good, smart, happy, and healthy? Without care, respect, and kindness, what purpose does intellectual competence serve? But teachers are discouraged if not forbidden to discuss with children the central questions about life's purpose. Children and teachers have had to leave their deeper questions about the mysteries of life at home. Nurturing the inner life was not held as the business of public education. We cannot consciously and systematically neglect anyone of the above aspects, lest the one that which we dearly feel matters most? Unfortunately, there is near global consensus that, education as being practiced today is generally so fearful of spirituality that it tends to focus on facts rather than meaning and information rather than wisdom, and fail to notice the real issues in life (Palmer, 2008). There are reasons, though. Principally, secular societies tend to equate spirituality with religion. Secondly, human development is partitioned into separate stages, and spiritual development is equated with 'higher' mental functions which most young children are presumed to lack. But, there are those who (Wilson, 2010) assert that children can (and do) have deeply spiritual experiences. Educators, statesmen and the public are gradually awakening to this actuality. This is exemplified in the following account:

'The spiritual is always present in public education whether we acknowledge it or not. Spiritual questions, rightly understood are embedded in every discipline, from health to history, physics to psychology, entomology and English. Spirituality – the human quest for connectedness – is not something that needs to be 'brought into' or 'added onto' the curriculum. It is at the heart of every subject we teach, where it waits to be brought forth' (Palmer, 2008).

Yes, dilemmas of our times are deeply spiritual ones that our children need to be prepared to meet as Montessori (1948) has foretold in her book - To Educate the Human Potential – "We must learn to trust human nature and educate children in such a way that they can develop their human potential. This is the only way we can bring real peace to the world. There is only one problem, and it is human development in its totality; once this is achieved in any unit - child or nation - everything else follows spontaneously and harmoniously."

One Way Out - Revolve the School Focus on Helping Students to Be Resilient

Real education needs to cultivate inner lives, by discovering positive models and experiences that demonstrate us how to live in a more integrated way. But education today is yet to reach at common vocabulary to talk about these things which requires to be, desirably, rooted in scientific research. Only then are efforts to integrate the inner lives of students into the curriculum, in all our schools, will become successful. Luckily, one way of integrating spirituality in schools of secular societies is being emerged from research on educational resilience. Academic resilience denotes the quality that brings 'accomplishments despite environmental adversities brought about by early traits, conditions and experience' (Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1994). Researchers and practitioners who focus on resiliency have begun to go beyond the identification of risk factors and prevention practices. Studies have been conducted on how young people's strengths and capabilities can be developed in order to protect them from the potential harm of their adverse circumstances (Linda, 2002). These strengths and capabilities, positive experiences or qualities, are called developmental assets. They are the "building blocks of healthy development" that assist young people in choosing positive paths, making wise decisions, and growing up to be caring and responsible adults. Early on in these researches, it was recognized that resilience can be cultivated by focusing on four developmental areas, first among those being "spirituality", i.e., living according to the belief in the interrelatedness of all things. The remaining three - "mental well-being", "emotional well-being", and "physical well-being- also have close ties with the spirituality (Heavy, Runner & Morris, 1997). Well-being among adolescents is affected by whether they believed they had good qualities, liked themselves, and felt loved and wanted (Resnick et al., 1997). Practices of spirituality, religion, and prayer were important too. These spiritual experiences will nurture academic development. Graham (2001) while investigating the role of spirituality in promoting resilience found that the former supported school-based competence.

Objective of this article

In the above context, this article attempts to explore the meaning of spirituality, spiritual intelligence and spiritual development in educational practice. Then, the characteristics of spiritual development is put side by sided with factors that were identified from resiliency research. The article will further discuss how to integrate factors that were identified as being nurturing both spirituality and resilience into education. This will open a way for teachers and other educational practitioners for integrating experiences which will lead to strengthening of inner life of children, with clear secular goal of making children succeed despite their adversities.

Spirituality, spiritual intelligence and its development

Spirituality is intimately allied to knowledge, value, well-being, self esteem, self-efficacy, and self-reliance, and solving problems (meaningfully). These are the lasting goals of education, irrespective of the

categorization such as secular, spiritual, religious or philosophical. For example Gookin (2002) submit that spirituality refers to the tacit knowledge that makes a person feel more spirited; an insightful relationship with oneself and others, a strong personal value system, and meaningful purpose in your life; and that the spiritual well-being is characterized by self esteem, self-efficacy, self-comfort, and self-reliance and the ensuing power to influence the universe and to think and act in a calmer state of mind. Spiritual intelligence, is "the intelligence with which we address and solve problems of meaning and value, the intelligence with which we can place our actions and our lives in a wider . . . context" (Zohar and Marshall (2000, p3). Integration of such qualities through education into the person will inculcate vision which will permit one to transcend beyond the self. Spiritual Quotient, then, is what we use to develop our longing and capacity for meaning, vision and value which facilitates a dialogue between reason and emotion, between mind and body and allows us to integrate the intrapersonal and the interpersonal, to transcend the gap between self and other and can be enhanced by various ways (Zohar & Marshall, 2000; pp. 23-27). Thus, spirituality in education is that which animates the mind and body, giving meaning, purpose and context to thought, word and action – or more simply, the meaning-making aspect of learning (Katzanjian, 1998 p1). In essence, spiritual intelligence, and its development, is about being (McMullen, 2003). Such an education which enhances spirituality is characterised by reflection, giving meaning to experience and a valuing of the non-material dimension of life. Shortly, there is no separate education one which support spiritual development, and another one which suits the secular ethos; the only real and good education is that which care to all the aspects of the person who lives in contemporaneous polities that the human society has evolved into.

Qualities/ values of Spiritually Developed Persons vs. those of Academically Resilient Persons

Table 1 illustrate how similar are the qualities / characteristics of a spiritually developed persons (Linda, 2002; Zohar & Marshall, 2000; Mackley, 1997), the values the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT, 1981) has listed for teachers to try to inculcate in their students through value education and the qualities the researchers on academic resilience have observed on resilient students (Gafoor and Neena, 2011).

Table 1: *Match of the Qualities of Spiritually Developed Persons and/or List of Values Identified By NCERT for Value Education with Characteristics of Academically Resilient Persons*

Qualities of spiritually developed persons*	List of 83 values identified by NCERT	Personal characteristics of academically resilient persons#
1. Appreciation of diversity 2. Caring 3. Compassion 4. Creative activities 5. Face and use suffering and transcend pain 6. Field independent 7. Holistic worldview 8. Honesty 9. Ideals and aspirations 10. Inner strength and resilience 11. Inspired by vision and values 12. Integrity 13. love and relationships 14. Optimistic 15. Personal power—sense of control 16. Reflection on experience 17. Self-awareness 18. Self-knowledge 19. Sense of purpose 20. Sensitivity and responsiveness 21. Service to others 22. Spontaneity 23. Striving and seeking	Abstinence. Appreciation of cultural values. Anti-Untouchability. Citizenship. Consideration for others. Concern for others. Co-operation. Cleanliness. Compassion. Common Cause. Common good. Courage. Courtesy. Curiosity. Democratic decision making. Devotion. Dignity of the individual. Dignity of manual work. Duty. Discipline. Endurance. Equality. Friendship. Faithfulness. Fellow-feeling. Freedom. Forward looking. Good manners. Gratitude of others. Gentlemanliness. Honesty. Helpfulness. Humanism. Hygienic living. Initiative. Integrity. Justice. Kindness. Kindness to animals. Leadership. National Unity. Loyalty to duty. National Consciousness. Non-Violence. National Integration. Obedience. Peace. Proper Utilization of time. Punctuality. Patriotism. Quest for knowledge. Purity. resourcefulness. Regularity. Respect for others. Reverence for old age. Sincerity. Simple living. Social justice. Self discipline . Self help. Self respect. Self Confidence. Self support. Self study. Self reliance. Self control. Self restraint . Social service. Solidarity of mankind . Sense of social responsibility. Sense of discrimination between good and bad. Socialism. Sympathy. Secularism and respect for all religions. Spirit of enquiry. Team work. Team spirit. Truthfulness. Tolerance. Universal truth. Universal love. Value for national and civic property.	1. *Ability to approach new situations,* 2. Academic and individual *aspiration* 3. *Academic motivation* 4. *Academic self concept* 5. *Achievement motivation* 6. *Affectional ties with family* 7. *Autonomy* 8. *Belief in self* 9. *Cohesion* 10. *Communication skills* 11. *Deep commitment to relationships* 12. *Dispositional attributes of the individual* 13. *Empathy* 14. *Highly adaptable temperament* 15. *Internal and realistic sense of control* 16. *Internal locus of control* 17. Involvement 18. *Less friction* 19. *Love* 20. *Loving and trusting relationships* 21. Motivation 22. *Positive and negative social behaviours* 23. *Positive coping strategies* 24. *Positive disposition* 25. *Positive responsiveness to others* 26. *Reflectiveness in unfamiliar situations* 27. *Resourcefulness* 28. *Responsibility* 29. *Satisfaction* 30. *Self - efficacy* 31. *Self - understanding* 32. *Self esteem* 33. *Self regulation* 34. *Sense of efficacy* 35. *Sense of purpose* 36. *Social competence* 37. *Student commitment* 38. *Students' belief about their total ability* 39. Task orientation

Note: *Based on Spiritual development –dimensions (Linda, 2002); competencies, skills, or qualities of a "spiritually intelligent" person (Zohar & Marshall, 2000); characteristics of a spiritually developed person (Mackley, 1997)
within-child factors fostering resilience identified from review of 83 studies on academic resilience (Gafoor & Neena, 2011) with italicized terms indicating match of those in 3rd column with values/qualities in 1st or 2nd columns

The qualities and values advocated by literature on spiritual and value education go with those of students demonstrating resilience. Hence, it is suggested that schools in secular societies can strive to foster academic resilience and thereby develop spirit of younger generation, without having to be under the scanner of threat to the ethos secular polity. Then what the schools needs to do? It is gladdening to observe that overlap between resiliency and spirituality does not end with the set of values they espouses. Resilience and spirituality are able to be developed by a shared set of strategies and techniques adaptable by schools and their teachers (see Table 2).

Table 2: *Correspondence between Educational Means of Developing the Spirit and Academic Resilience in Students Identified from Relevant sets of Literature*

	Literature on promoting spiritual development*	Literature on fostering academic resilience #
Instruction	**Developing Self-awareness and Self-Knowledge** with opportunities to be aware of own inner world of thoughts and feelings, hopes and fears, personality, needs and wants ,gifts, abilities and strengths as well as their limitations and weaknesses **Developing Sensitivity and Responsiveness** by becoming aware of moral obligations, being moved to deep emotion, reflection and /or action, by aspects of life such as the natural and made world, music, art, architecture, literature, poverty, injustice, innocent suffering, mystery and human achievement, expressing gratitude and appreciation, transcending the present moment, e.g. in recalling the past, reflecting on the future, or exercising their imagination **Developing Inner Strength and Resilience** to be hopeful, patient, persevering and resilient in the face of difficulty, exercise self-control over the expression of instincts and impulses, thoughts and feelings respond with courage to challenging situations e.g. in confronting difficult situations on the playing field, losing a game or resisting peer pressure, set targets, plan to achieve them and take appropriate action to do so **Nurturing the Ideals and Aspirations** with opportunities to: create and invent works of beauty, value and usefulness , develop worthwhile beliefs and values **Enhancing Love and Relationships** by developing intimate and enduring relationships with other people, encouraging to sympathise and empathise with other people, expressing regret and apologise, when appropriate to do so , pursuing ideals and visions for the future, seeking to create, maintain and repair relationships with others, valuing themselves and other people **Promoting Seeking and Striving** for meaning in experiences of change, loss, suffering, beauty, birth, and death , to do what is right **Encouraging Reflection on experience** on deep or ultimate questions and seek answers to, on moral choices, on the way their attitudes and values ,	Adapting curriculum and instruction to respond student diversity Democratic classroom learning environment Co-operative learning Culturally compatible classroom programmes Curriculum exposure on diversity Fostering a sense of achievement in children Instructional strategy Pacing and feedback Student engagement Teach students that they have innate resilience Teach to student's strength Tutoring
Teacher behavior	Promoting active learning Building pupil's self esteem consideration of ultimate questions - questions about meaning, purpose and value extended opportunities to work on a topic Students must have to opt 'for depth over breadth	Caring and support , Encouragement of student Engagement and involvement , Enhancing students personal growth and increasing social contacts, Higher levels of educational support , Interaction between teacher and students Mentoring , Teacher expectations -feedback and actions
School ethos and environment	appreciation of diversity within the school Approaches that help individuals and groups to self-organize believe that students are listened to, celebration of individual and collective success constructive management of pupils' behaviour inquiry, exploring and learning about what has heart and meaning personal change as a vehicle for systemic change and social justice positive attitudes towards visitors positive staff-student relationship school culture use students gifts of intuition, imagination, and creativity Values and attitudes to be promoted	Meaningful opportunities to participate Cohesion Warmth Safe and orderly environment Positive school experience Academic environment factors Extracurricular activities School support

Note: *Based Linda, (Ed). 2002; Zohar & Marshall's 2000); (Mackley, 1997)
identified from review of 83 studies on academic resilience (Gafoor & Neena, 2011)

Sch

ools need to identify what could be done. Education should be seen as a lifelong process; helping students to see the interconnectedness with one another and with all of life, by a commitment to ecological principles, places and time for silence and stillness, valuing self-knowledge and healthy interpersonal relationships and thus the building of community. As Henry Adams shares, "A teacher affects eternity". Teachers are concerned in an important way with the total development of human beings – physical, intellectual, social, moral and spiritual (NCTE, 2009). Hence knowing oneself is as crucial to good teaching as knowing students and subject. Teachers themselves have to have ability to use pain and tragedy they face in life to educate first themselves and also to use the lessons they maintained from life to highlight their students' life experiences, accurate self-assessment, achievement orientation and social skills with teamwork and collaboration, adaptability, awareness for others with empathy, capacity to face and use adversity, communication, leadership, and conflict management, conscientiousness, courage to own their mistakes, developing others influence, emotional self awareness, organizational awareness, self confidence, self management with self-control, service orientation, and trustworthiness.

Conclusion

The task is unambiguous. Schools must help students to fight adversities from within to develop into persons with full-fledged capacities. Conceding the uniqueness of every child, school need to ensure that learning needs of every one is met. This in turn requires that wide-ranging opportunities to support every child are provided, by working in tandem with the family, parents and community. A school promoting spiritual intelligence has to encourage every child to have higher aspirations and to make informed decisions and life choices, providing for the life even beyond its walls. Schools have to provide a safe and secure environment in which not only are students safe and secure but they also feel safe and secure. Instruction must develop children's curiosity, imagination, creativity and aesthetic responses to life and learning, and promote a sense of awe and wonder; encouraging students to raise, and reflect on, ultimate questions. Personal responsibility for students' actions must be ensured. Encourage working co-operatively and sharing the responsibilities. This will lead to the development of self-confidence, cooperation, sensitivity to others, reliability, initiative and understanding. School has to celebrate the richness of culture and tradition of every community and social group of which a student is enrolled. A school needs be a place where every child has the opportunity to develop healthy, stay safe, be a successful learner by enjoying learning and achievement, and to be a confident individual who is able to make a positive contribution to the total life. In every school, every child must be able to grow and develop responsible local, national and global citizen who cares for others.

References

Gafoor, K. A. & Neena, K.K. (2011). Factors fostering academic resilience: a review of literature *Endeavours in Education*, (accepted for publication).

Gookin, J. (2002). Defining And Nurturing Spirituality At The National Outdoor Leadership School. In J. Gookin & D. Wells (Eds.), *NOLS environmental education notebook*. Lander, WY: NOLS. Downloaded from www.nols.edu/store/pdf/env_ed_spirituality.pdf

Graham, B. L. (2001). Resilience among American Indian youth: First Nations youth resilience study. *Dissertation Abstracts International, 62(3-B),* 1615.

Hart, T. (2005). Spiritual experiences and capacities of children and youth. In E. C. Rhehlkepartain, P. E. King, L. Wagener, and P. L. Benson (Eds.). *The Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence.* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, pp. 163-178

HeavyRunner, I., & Morris, J. S. (1997). *Traditional native culture and resilience. Research Practice, 5(1).* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota. Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI), College of Education and Human Development. Retrieved November 18, 2002, from http://www.coled.umn.edu/carei/Reports/Rpractice/Spring97/traditiona l.htm

Kazanjian V (1998) *Reuniting mind with spirit* The Witness Available at http://www.wellesley.edu/RelLife/transformation/pub-articles.html

Linda, L. (Ed). (2002). *Schools with Spirit: Nurturing the Inner Lives of Children and Teachers*. Boston: Beacon Press 198.

Mackley, J. 1997 *Looking Inwards, Looking Outwards: exploring life's possibilities – Teacher Handbook [Looking Inwards, Looking Outwards]*CEM 1851001018 p.10.

McMullen, B (2003) Spitritual intelligence *Studentbmj 11*, 60-61

NCTE (2009). *National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education*. New Delhi: National Council for Teacher Education

Palmer, P. (1998). *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life* California Jossey Bass

Resnick, M. D., Bearman, P. S., Blum, R. W., Bauman, K. E., Harris, K. M.,Jones, J., Tabor, J., Behring, T., Sieving, R. E., Shew, M., Ireland, M., Bearinger, L. H., & Udry, J. R. (1997). Protecting adolescents from harm: Findings from the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health. *Journal of the American Medical Association, 278(10)*, 823-832.

Wang, M.C., & Haertel, G.D., & Walberg, H.J. (1994). Educational resilience in Inner Cities. In M.C. Wang & E. W. Gordon (Eds), Educational resilience in inner-city America: Challenges and Prospects. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Wilson, R (2010, SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER) *Spiritual Needs Of Children* Exchange, 24-27

Zohar, D., Marshall, I. (2000). *SQ: Connecting with our spiritual intelligence*. Bloomsbury Publishing, NY.