ABSTRACT: The focus of this study is how educational leadership can respond to the emerging spiritual culture amongst college students in the United States as documented by the recent study published by the University of California – Los Angeles (UCLA) Higher Education Research Institute (HERI). The suggestion in this work is that the evolving notion of spiritual intelligence (SQ) is one way to meet this leadership challenge. Within this framework, SQ is critically analyzed, and a prescriptive model for leadership in institutions of higher education is presented as a means to conceptualize nurturing college students’ spirituality within the academy.

“Academic fundamentalism…[is] the stubborn refusal of the academy to acknowledge any truth that does not conform to professional dogma…..certain ideas are simply excluded, and woe to those that espouse them” (Smith, 1990; p.5).

Page Smith (American scholar and historian)

“We are not humans on this earth seeking to have spiritual experiences; we are spirits having a human experience” (de Chardin, 1976; p.116).

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (French scientist and philosopher)

In our postmodern era of Western society, it is common to hear the assertion that a person is spiritual but not religious. What is meant by such a declaration? Clearly what is being conveyed is that some individuals hold spirituality and religion as not being synonymous. The two notions, though related, are separate issues. Many today in society distinguish religion as man made laws and dogma that have been systematically institutionalized by groups within society. Conversely, spirituality is the view that an individual’s constructed personal belief in a higher power or Supreme Being is not necessarily linked to any religious institution, orientation, or particular dogma.

For many, religion is a constricted view of psyche and social reality which is often intolerant of contrary views. On the other hand, spirituality is seen as being an open-ended, deep personal experience associated with an individual's quest to discover their self-essence and sense of purpose in society as a whole, rather than meet the requirements of a dogmatic group. This distinction between what is viewed as religion and spirituality represents a novel cultural shift and is resulting in a new and emerging Western social phenomenon (Armstrong, 1995, 2004; Carrette & King, 2004; Heelas, Woodhead, Seel, Szerszynski, and Tusting, 2005).

Recent research has revealed that this emerging cultural idea and social development has now infiltrated our institutions of higher education. There is a fresh generation of college students constructing a newborn social reality for educational leadership to understand and address genially within the context of our traditional academic ethos.

This study is a narrative analysis that examines the current research of spirituality among college students as a newly-found academic dilemma for educational leadership to address as well as scholars who call for a spiritual revitalization within the academy.

Furthermore, recent research of how spiritual musing is being identified as a cognitive process resulting in distinct
intellectual characteristics is also explored. These characteristics are being termed as spiritual intelligence (SQ). While this analysis does not present action research for educational leadership to utilize as guidance to integrate spirituality into the academy, or empirical scientific data for analysis to support the integration of SQ into the learning process, it does delve into research of students’ spiritual disposition toward their college experience, and seeks to merge psychological and biological findings on the linkage between spirituality and intelligence (Machovec, 2002; Sacks, 1999; Vaughan, 2002; White, 2001; Wolman, 2001; Zohar & Marshall, 2000).

The specific aim of this work is to make an innovative contribution to educational leadership by stimulating interest in the phenomenon of spirituality in higher education and spiritual intelligence through stimulating deeper attentiveness regarding the topic. Spirituality as related to higher education’s student population is not just a fascinating notion or pioneering enterprise, but is a critical leadership challenge to be realized and acted upon at present.

The analysis of this new leadership challenge in higher education is organized as follows: (1) a succinct critique of University of California at Los Angeles’ (UCLA) Higher Education Research Institute’s (HERI) study on the relationship between spirituality and this generation of college students’ opinions regarding the issue, (2) an account of the evolution of intelligence theory and emerging concept of spiritual intelligence, and (3) a presentation of a prescriptive leadership model of how to visualize and academically promote college students spirituality and spiritual intelligence within institutions of higher education.

**College Students and Spirituality: A New Leadership Challenge**

The recent research report by University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) Higher Education Research Institute (HERI), entitled “The Spiritual Life of College Students,” (HERI, 2005) examined what college students think of spirituality, its role in their lives, and how they perceive spirituality in regards to their higher education experience. HERI’s findings are based on a survey of 112,232 freshmen attending 236 colleges and universities over a five-year period (2000-2004). The study explored how students’ opinions about spirituality translate into differences in their psychological development, physical well-being, socio-political attitudes, and religious preference. The study’s findings were compiled and published in spring 2005. The results uncover that college students in our day have a high level of interest in spirituality, are enthusiastically absorbed in a spiritual pursuit, and have lofty anticipation of the role higher education will play in their spiritual and intellectual development.

Alexander Astin and Helen Astin, the research project principal investigators, state (HERI, 2005):

*The project based in part often on the realization that the relative amount of attention that colleges and universities devote to the ‘exterior’ and ‘interior’ aspects of students’ development has gotten out of balance…we have increasingly come to neglect the student’s inner development – the sphere of values and beliefs, emotional maturity, spirituality, and self-understanding (p.1).*

HERI’s finding strongly support their assertion. Four in five students have an interest in spirituality, three-fourths say they are “searching for meaning or purpose in life,” 80% are interested in spirituality, 76% are searching for meaning and purpose in life, 74% have discussions about the meaning of life with friends, 81% attend religious services, 80% discuss religion or spirituality with friends, 79% believe in God, 69% pray often, 83% believe that “non-religious people can be just as moral as religious believers,” and 64% feel that “most people can grow spiritually without being religious.”

The research team conclude that today’s college students are searching for deeper meaning in their lives, looking for ways to cultivate their inner selves, are seeking ways to be compassionate and charitable in regards to what they think and feel about the many issues confronting their society and the greater global community (HERI, 2005).

Diana Chapman Walsh, President of Wellesley College, states this about the report’s conclusion (HERI, 2005):

To have the Astin team [HERI] turning its prodigious research expertise to questions of how to support students who want to explore their religious and spiritual identities and commitments in the context of a rigorous liberal education is a great gift to higher education. The findings from this important study will help us [educational leadership] understand where we are serving our students well and where we may be falling short (p.3).
Within the same mental framework, Lee S. Shulman, President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, reflects on the findings: “How often do we encounter a research program that addresses a set of questions so central, so pivotal, so critical, and in retrospect, so obvious, that we wonder aloud why no one thought to ask these questions [of college students] before?” (HERI, 2005; p.4).

UCLA’s HERI findings do have substantial connotations for educational leadership. Perhaps the most significant challenge for leadership is that college students have “high expectations for the role their institutions will play in their emotional and spiritual development.” For example, more than two-thirds (69%) believe that it is “essential” or “very important” that their college enhances their self-understanding, 67% rate highly the role they want their college to play in developing their personal values, while 48% also say it is “essential” or “very important” that colleges encourage their personal expression of spirituality.

The reality is that spirituality is returning to serious academic discourse, and is proving to offer much in the process. Today's college students are active learners asking profound existential questions: What is the meaning of college learning? What is the relationship between intellectual development and spiritual development? How do I balance material pursuits with my spiritual quest?

The Infusion of Spirituality into the Higher Education Cannon: The Academic Contention

Congruent with HERI’s findings is that the idea of spiritual resurgence is already an issue of growing debate in higher education. This development illuminates what appears to be a shift back toward the exploration of spiritual concerns submerged since the advent of scientific positivisms and the effort to reduce, if not eradicate, the role of spirituality in education (Bertrand, 2003; Kessler, 2000; Moffett, 1994; Palmer, 1999).

Many educational theorists believe that spirituality is a basic human inner drive, a cognitive energy having multiple forms of expression, with religion being only one. The thinking is that spiritually grounded learners are vibrant thinkers because the soul is harmonious with the mind. Therefore the educational process should focus on the development of the whole person to make meaningful intellectual connections between the social life-world “without” as well as their psyche soulful life-world “within.” As such, educators are obligated to honor spirituality as part of learners’ developmental process (Miller, 2000; Miller & Nakagawa, 2002; Glazer, 1994; Sinetar, 2000).

Recently a group of theorists have espoused spirituality as being an integral part of postsecondary education. They proclaim that the history of Western postsecondary education reveals that the profession was originally deeply rooted in spiritual development. Their call is for a renewed reconciliation between spirituality and intellectuality. They believe that educational leadership can accomplish this through consciously integrating spiritual elements into reflectively constructed educational programs and learning experiences. The challenge today for leadership in postsecondary education is to recover its spiritual heritage and infuse it back into the learning process (English, Fenwick, & Parsons, 2003).

Parker Palmer’s thought has significant relevance for leadership in higher education. He has been a tireless advocate for uncovering an inherent relationship between education and spirituality. He asserts that scholars must place current modernist obsession with positivistic objectivism in its proper academic perspective. He staunchly rejects how objectivism, logical positivism, and scientism are upheld as the dominant epistemological orientation and viewed as an academic dogma such as the trinity in Christianity.

Palmer believes that objectivism has a valid necessary place in higher education, but it should not be the endorsed as some sort of epistemological dogma, the benchmark for knowledge acquisition, or the measure of intellectuality. Conversely, he thinks that authentic learning is sort of a subjective spiritual formation that honors the learner’s freedom to creatively pursue ideas. The goal of education is to develop the objective rational intellect and to nurture the subjective domain of the mind. It is from the subjective intellect that a sense of wonder emerges that is integrated with the objective domain and rational inquiry. An adherence to subjective inner exploration of learners as part of their intellectual development constitutes learning as a spiritual journey, which is in essence the very soul of education (Palmer, 1993).

Accordingly, Palmer visualizes higher education as an interconnected intellectual and spiritual developmental journey
that weaves a complex web of connections between the two psyche domains of objectivity and subjectivity that
nourishes the mind and forms the whole person. The belief is that spiritually grounded learners are animated thinkers
who possess meaningful thought patterns, innovative ideas, and unique imaginations because the soul is
harmoniously integrated with the mind (Palmer, 1998/1999).

Elizabeth Tisdell (2003) contends that spirituality is an important part of the human experience and is fundamental to
understanding how individuals construct meaningful knowledge. She asserts that spirituality has a deep cultural
dimension to it that informs intellectual development. The process of meaning making is manifested in and mediated
by the cultural context. For postsecondary educational leaders to appropriately facilitate meaning making as a
spiritual experience, they must make an empathetic linkage to adult students’ subjective cultural grounding. She
challenges leadership to construct an educational milieu that celebrates both the cultural differences and the
commonalities of the human experience as a spiritual endeavor.

Robert Emmons (1999) asserts that persons who demonstrate a capacity for heightened consciousness of
transcendence possess spiritual intelligence. Spiritual intelligence empowers the individual to cope with and resolve
life-world issues, while demonstrating virtuous behavior such as humility, compassion, gratitude, and wisdom. He
describes spiritual intelligence as the cognitive ability to envision unrealized possibilities and transcend ordinary
consciousness through applying basic thought processes that have both temporal and existential meanings.

These scholars’ arguments raise the obvious question: how can we frame spirituality within academia? One new area
of research may provide us with a starting point for action. Cognitive, psychological, and biological research into what
is being termed spiritual intelligence (SQ) holds promising possibilities as to how to approach this complex challenge,
yet intriguing issue, of integrating spirituality into higher education’s canon and life-world to meet the needs of college
students.

The Theory of Spiritual Intelligence (SQ)

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 as well as a positivistic orientation. 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).

Research findings were applied to establishing cognitive assessment standards and to establish predictors of
academic performance – most notably that being the Intelligence Quotient (IQ). The notion of IQ became the
scientific bench mark to profile a learner’s intellectual capacities and educational possibilities. The IQ assessment
model has dominated educational theory and practice at all levels for several decades (Binet, 1909; Gardner, 1983;
1993; Wolman, 2001).

Towards the end of the 20th Century, a number of cognitive scientists rebelled against the notion of a universal IQ
standardization, their contention being that there is not an objective, standardized, assessment system to definitively
measure an individual’s intelligence. Though scientific research into cognitive development is significant, the human
phenomenon of intelligence and the intellectual developmental process are much too comprehensive and subjective
for a rigid depiction.

Howard Gardner has been a leader at the forefront of the counter-movement. His research explored the
differentiation of mental processes and corresponding ways of knowing. His conclusion is that each individual has a
unique baseline of cognitive skills and abilities that collectively constitute the intellect. These cognitive skills are
inclusive of the conventional IQ definition; however, he greatly expanded upon it as the sole expression of
intelligence.

Gardner defines seven multiple intelligences that are interconnected and interrelated: (1) Linguistic (language), (2)
logical-mathematical (logical reasoning), (3) spatial (visual), (4) bodily kinesthetic (bodily-physical expression, dance),
(5) musical, (6), interpersonal (social), and (7) intrapersonal (self-knowledge). Multiple intelligence theory reveals that
learners have varied ways of learning and knowing. Thus, each learner has a matrix of intellectual tendencies and a
distinctive configuration of these intelligences (Gardner, 1983; 1993; 2001).

Gardner’s argument is particularly sound given that it is validated through interdisciplinary research including anthropology, cognitive psychology, developmental psychology, psychometrics, biological studies, animal physiology, and neuroanatomy. He specifically asserts that for there to be a viable theory of intelligence there must exist biological evidence to support the hypothesis. That is, evidence of intelligence must be grounded in our knowledge regarding the physiology of the brain’s structure and the mind’s process.

Daniel Goleman (1997) further expanded the concept of multiple intelligences. He asserts that there exists emotional intelligence (EQ) as an identifiable intelligence. Emotional intelligence is closely related to Gardner’s interpersonal (social) and intrapersonal (self-knowledge) ways of knowing. EQ is the intellectual ability to construct self-awareness, motivation, altruism, and empathy. These cognitive skills and abilities are fundamental to constructing meaningful social relations and to achieving personal fulfillment. The significance of Goleman’s research is that it further supports the notion that intelligence is a vastly complex, a fluid concept, and that our understanding of it is still shallow and continually evolving (the realization being that other manifestations of intelligence are yet to be identified and defined).

While conducting his research, Gardner observed that certain individuals have the natural ability to think reflectively about intense existential questions. These individuals have innate cognitive abilities to achieve altered states of consciousness like those exemplified by the World’s great mystics. He went so far as to specifically identify avant-garde intellectual French philosopher, scientist, and mystic, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, as a plausible model of a spiritual intellect. Given this, Gardner seriously considered adding spiritual intelligence to his inventories of multiple intelligences. Even so, he concluded that his observation was not conclusive because there was not enough biological knowledge of the brain’s physiology at the time to confidently identify the existence of a spiritual intelligence (Gardner, 2001). Gardner strictly adhered to the principle that an intelligence could not identified solely on behavioral or thought patterns, but that there also be congruent, observed biological evidence within the brain as well.

However, several scholars today are pursuing the quest for spiritual intelligence that Gardner abandoned at the time. These scholars believe that spirituality is an important intellectual and cognitive developmental component that should not be ignored simply because it is perceived as being highly subjective and abstruse. Spiritual intelligence is viewed as the cognitive processes and abilities of meaning construction, intuitively seeing interconnectedness, a high level of existential selfhood, and a sense of unified reality, and there is now biological evidence to support its existence (Alper, 2001; D’Aquili & Newburg, 1999; McKinney, 1994; Newburg, D’Aquili & Rause, 2002; Joseph, Newburg, Albright, Rausch, Persinger, James, & Nietzsche, 2003).

Latest biological research on the brain’s organization suggests that there is empirical physical evidence giving validity for spiritual intelligence theory. Michael Persinger (1996) and V.J. Ramachandran (1999) claim to have discovered the “God spot” within the brain. The "God spot" is an area in the brain that functions like a built-in spiritual center located within neural connections in the temporal lobes. Examination of various brain scans, taken with positron emission topography, reveal that these neural areas light up whenever subjects are exposed to discussion of spiritual motifs or religious topics. These scientists are very careful to point out that the “God spot” does not prove the existence of a Divine Being. Nevertheless, their findings strongly suggest that the brain is wired for cognitive constructs that produce meaning-making reflection, and thus that humans are naturally predisposed to think in spiritual terms.

Wolf Singer and Charles Gray have discovered that there are neural processes in the brain devoted to making interconnections that unify rational, emotional, and spiritual experiences. Prior to Singer and Gray’s (1995) findings, the consensus in the scientific community was that the brain’s organization is capable of producing only two neural processes: (a) neurological processes serially connecting neural tracts empowering the brain to think logically and rationally in a systematic fashion, and (b) neurological processes where thousands of neurons are interconnected in a chaotic mode of massively organized bundles resulting in affective thoughts. However, their observation of unifying neural oscillations means that a third kind of thinking exists, unitized thinking. The brain-unitized, neurological organizations result in cognitive processes that seek to answer spiritual questions (Singer & Gray, 1995; Singer, 1999).
Molecular biologist Dean Hamer (2005) has developed the theory of the “God Gene.” He conducted extensive research on the temperament of cancer patients. He administered the Temperamental Character Inventory (TCI) assessment instrument developed by psychiatrist, Robert Cloninger. Part of TCI’s assessment is of a person’s temperament toward “self-transcendence.” Self-transcendence is described as having three distinct characteristics: (1) Self-forgetfulness (the ability to become absorbed into an experience), (2) transpersonal identification (feeling of connectedness to a larger universe or grand purpose), and (3) mysticism (an openness to things not tangibly verifiable). Collectively these characteristics provide a scientific definition of being spiritual.

Hamer categorized the results from low to high according to the TCI scale. He attempted to match to the gene configuration of these individuals in an effort to identify the DNA responsible for scoring differences. He specifically focused on nine genes thought to be directly linked to the production of “brain chemicals” (monoamines: serotonin, norepinephrine, and dopamine). These chemical compounds are believed to influence mood and motor control.

Hamer argues that there is compelling evidence that the gene known as VMAT2 (versicular monoamine transporter) has a direct correlation between it and the TCI scores. That is, those with VMAT2 in a specific spot ranked high, while those who had low evidence of the gene in that spot had a low score. Thus, his conclusion is that those individuals with a high level are likelier to exhibit a temperament of self-transcendence, self forgetfulness, and mystical insights. Therefore, there is a scientific notion of spirituality. He terms this gene that has a direct effect on the brain’s chemicals resulting in an individual’s sense of spirituality, the “God Gene.”

The research of physicist, Diana Zohar, and psychologist, Ian Marshall, (2000) has sought to explicitly define spiritual intelligence (SQ). They observe that computers can have a high IQ; some animals have a high EQ, but only human have SQ. They define SQ as the intellectual ability to question why we are here and to be creative in our pursuit of answers. Spiritual intelligence is the cognitive force from which humans address and solve problems of meaning and value, to place our life-world actions in a wider, more meaningful context, and reflectively assess which course of action is more meaningful than another. These cognitive processes result in both social modifications and consciousness transformations, which collectively form spiritual intelligence.

Cognitive psychologist Richard N. Wolman has also provided a description of spiritual intelligence. Wolman believes that all humans possess varying levels of an inherent drive for self-improvement manifested in humans’ spiritual thinking (Wolman, 2001).

Wolman’s definition of spirituality is not an endorsement of a religious orientation or theological disposition, but is described as the soul of intellectuality that moves us toward increasing levels of selfhood. Spiritual intelligence is rooted in the human need for understanding the world and our place in it. Therefore, we need to understand and seek ways to develop the ability to think with our soul.

Wolman writes (2001):
By spiritual I mean the ancient and binding human quest for connectedness with something larger and more trustworthy than our egos – with our own souls, with one another, with the world of history and nature, with the invisible winds of the spirit, with the mystery of being alive…Spiritual intelligence can best be seen as a capacity for a particular kind of experience we humans possess, and one for which we also demonstrate certain related abilities. Our task now is to understand how this intelligence can and does influence our lives, how its energy can be harnessed, and how we can come to know ourselves better through spiritual self-direction (pp. 26, 119).

Wolman developed the PsychoMatrix Spirituality Inventory (PSI) as an assessment system that provides insight into a person’s spiritual life-world. He thinks that “understanding the context and meaning of our actions frees us to make conscious choices, rather than enslaving us to respond reflexively to life’s demands” (p.3). Accordingly, the development of spiritual intelligence empowers individuals to articulate ineffable moments and in doing so releases the psyche’s intrinsic spiritual energy.

The PSI consists of eighty questions structured around seven prescribed spiritual factors: (1) Divinity is the consciousness of a Divine Energy Source or God figure, (2) Mindfulness is the awareness of the interconnection of
the mind and body with an emphasis on practices that enhance their relationship, (3) Intellectuality is a rational, inquiring cognition toward spirituality with a focus on the sacred typically perpetuated through writings, (4) Community is the quality of spirituality through enacting meaningful social connections and building servant interpersonal relationships, (5) Extrasensory perception refers to the perceptions associated with non-rational ways of knowing, such as intuitions and meta-cognitive experiences as associated with mysticism or a sense of higher consciousness, (6) Childhood spirituality is a person’s autobiographical association to spirituality through past psychological experiences and social activities, and (7) Trauma is a stimulus to spiritual awareness through experiencing personal physical or emotional illness or traumatic exposure to the trauma of an illness experienced by some other person (pp. 157-247).

These seven factors are registered on a matrix scale from low to moderate to high. The scoring matrix of these factors provides a profile of thought patterns associated with spiritual intelligence. The PSI assessment system warrants further examination by leadership in higher education in order to determine its validity for enhancing learners’ intellectual development and constructing affective learning contexts objectively.

From this literature review we can gleam that the collective consensus amongst researchers is that spiritual intelligence (SQ) is comprised of a set of seven cognitive characteristics.

- SQ is a rational higher level of consciousness
- SQ is the capacity for affective intellectual development
- SQ implies that an individual has the unique ability to construct a vision that is infused with a notion of ultimate purpose
- SQ is the ability of intuitively seeing connections between existential ideas and varied life-world experiences
- SQ provides a grounding for authentic self-efficacy coupled with an empathetic understanding of others
- SQ is a predisposition to see inherent connections that may not be tangible and to seek existential answers that support a rational theoretical orientation,
- Scientific research suggests that the brain’s actual “physiological organization” is designed to produce spiritual thoughts.

**Points of Promise and Limitations for SQ Theory**

These seven SQ theoretical characteristics hold several points of promise for educational leadership in addressing the expectations of college students in regards to their intellectual and spiritual development. Nevertheless, as with any new area of research, there are limitations as well.

- SQ assessment can provide an objective pathway into the students’ inner life world that is so intimately related to intellectual development. Such insight can assist leadership in integrating the logical-rational and subjective-reflexive contexts of learning into holistic educational experiences.
- SQ can provide a platform for leadership from which to build deeper relationships, as well as serve as the foundation from which a linkage can be reconciled between objective, disciplinary-centered, academic learning, and subjective learning and reflective self-development.
- SQ can provide greater insight into augmenting instructional designs and practices. By understanding learners’ SQ levels, educators are given greater insight into facilitating learner-centered educational contexts and learning processes.
- Perhaps most significantly, SQ awareness has the potential to increase the retention and success of at-risk college students, and can provide important insights into their affective life-world. The more leadership understands about college students, the greater the chances for their academic success (White, 2001).

These points of promise above merit further reflection and research on behalf of educational leadership. On the contrary, utilizing spiritual intelligence raises many serious questions regarding its limitations:

The most obvious limitation is the language stigma associated with spirituality. The conceptualization and acceptance of spiritual intelligence will be a difficult challenge within an academy deeply ingrained with a Western cultural interpretation of spirituality as being synonymous with a theological ideology or religious program. Such thinking is
deeply implanted in our collective cultural consciousness, and will present an obstacle that many may not be able to effectively overcome.

To incorporate the notion of spirituality into an educational context is demanding for scholars who are institutionally required to focus on objective, content-based learning. Many in higher education who are positivistic and pragmatic in their academic orientation will find it difficult to see the relevance of SQ for reaching prescribed educational objectives.

There is an inherent tension between the theoretical positions in higher education regarding knowledge acquisition as an intellectual product versus higher level learning as an intellectual process. Spiritual intelligence naturally falls into the latter theoretical domain.

The focus on SQ could potentially create further anxiety for leaders who are already under the burden of measuring students’ academic performance and objectively defining intellectual rigor. There is a possibility that spiritual intelligence measurement of students, such as the PSI assessment, might impede their greater academic agenda. This is an issue that must be explored seriously by leadership so as to avoid creating a more convoluted educational context, which would ultimately be self-defeating.

Ethical practice is another concern. Should colleges profile their students’ subjective minds to the degree that it could influence leadership and the faculty’s perception of them? To spiritually assess students whom one will be leading raises ethical questions that must be considered. Academic leadership must not allow SQ to create a bias toward certain students.

Equally important are cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic issues in a society becoming increasingly multicultural and socially stratified. Can a highly subjective notion such as “spirituality” successfully and judicially be nurtured and measured against the diverse backdrop of college students’ racial, ethnic, gender, and cultural understandings of spirituality?

Finally, there is the lack of an advanced research base to unquestionably endorse SQ as a sound theory. Criticisms have been leveled against Persinger and Ramachandran’s hypothesis of the “God Spot,” Singer and Gray’s assertion that the brain is naturally wired for spiritual thinking, and Zohar and Marshall’s argument that SQ is the ultimate degree of intelligence. Leadership should not fully embrace the notion of spiritual intelligence into higher education solely based on ideas framed around pseudo-neurological fads or psychological and social fashions.

The Leadership Challenge of Spirituality in Higher Education: A Prescriptive Model

Without a question, students of higher education today sincerely seek to learn and live in an educational environment that honors their spirituality. For these students to satisfy their desire for a higher spiritual purpose regarding their intellectual development requires leadership to provide opportunities for nurturing their sense of a higher self and consciousness. Engaging students in spiritual practices will not eliminate all stress factors or prevent psychological and sociological turbulence, but leadership can help provide a stable learning environment for deeper inner musing where the stress of college life can actually halt spiritual progress. Educational leadership has an essential role to play in providing the vision for this course of action. The question is, what can be prescribed for leadership to do at their colleges and universities to construct a spiritual milieu and policies that advance a vision that is inclusive of the existential side of the mind?

To address this question adequately is a uniquely novel leadership challenge for the academy. Obviously, many college students will find their spiritual grounding in a particular religious tradition and dogma outside of the academy. This aspect is clearly delineated in the UCLA report. It is important to honor these students’ spiritual convictions that have been shaped by a denomination, while not validating or supporting a specific religion within a public institution. Public educational leadership must uphold the wall that separates church and state. As documented in the report, many students believe that one can be spiritual without being religious, and that spirituality can emerge from secular endeavors. Thus, there is a fine line, yet a real distinction, between sectarian proselytizing and intellectually nurturing student spirituality within an academic setting.
What is described here is a prescriptive model for educational leadership that illustrates one way to nurture students' spirituality in higher education. The model is developed around three concepts: (1) Academic curricular activities (students’ mind/body connection), (2) reflective time and space (students’ spirituality “within”), and (3) social servant action (students’ spirituality “without”).

**Academic Curricular Activities: Students’ Mind/Body Connection**

Leadership can nurture spirituality at their institutions by providing the vision for academic curricular activities that foster the student's mind and body connection. These spiritual academic curricular activities can be interdisciplinary in scope such as - “Spirituality across college disciplines: Exploring SQ dispositions.” The Psycho Matrix Instrument (PSI), or something akin to it, could be utilized so that students can help other students to gage the development of their spiritual competencies as they progress through the learning experience. These curricular activities would be inclusive of interdisciplinary readings, learning activities, and other means of intellectual development.

The list here is just suggestive as to what could be conceived by the disciplines: The social sciences and writings of Che Guevara, Mahatma Gandhi, or Martin Luther King, Jr.; anthropology and the writings of Carlos Castaneda; mathematics and Srivasa Ramaunjan and meta-mathematical concepts; technology and works that explore cyberculture and spirituality; education and spirituality; philosophy provides any number of readings such Sri Aurobindo or Pierre Teilhard de Chardin; from the world of science, most especially works that explore the relationship between new findings in physics and mysticism, and in the life sciences, the recent studies on spirituality in relation to the brain or nature; psychology has a wealth of works in the area of transformative psychology; and even in the field of business education there are works such as inspirational leadership and the art of self-fulfillment at work. This outline of interdisciplinary academic curricular activity is simply illustrative in scope.

Likewise, the arts can be an extremely important academic curricular activity to promote intellectual spirituality. Current programs in the expressive arts such as dance, music, drama, reflective creative writing, and the visual arts can utilize or integrate ways to foster spirituality and SQ development. Expressive arts are based upon the premise that each human being has the capacity to express and shape spiritual experiences into an artistic form that can empower and inspire others as well. Expressive art has been explained as creating in the service of others' life-worlds.

Finally, these curricular activities for developing the mind can be augmented by curricular activities for the development of the body. Students could learn to cultivate their spirituality and develop their bodies through offerings such as Yoga, Tai Chi, meditation, nutrition, achieving and maintaining wellness, preventive health, holistic health, sexuality and psychological counseling. The primary educational objective of these activities is to provide an opportunity for students to develop spiritually through exploring the mind and body as an interconnected system.

**Reflective Time and Space: Students’ Spirituality “Within”**

Educational leadership in higher education can support specific times and identify spaces where students can cultivate the habits of the psyche and qualities of the soul that are typically ignored or simply overlooked as being an important part of the institutional mission. Most leaders view their role as managers of academic and social activities that are heavily reliant on the physical sense perceptions and intellectual rationality. The result of this is that inner self-enrichment time, for deep reflection, is diminished, and the place for mindful reflection is not provided.

Time and space must be provided for students if their spirituality is to be meaningfully experienced and developed. Spiritual reflection needs to become an habitual part of college life and the learning process. The aim is to provide specific opportunities for what Eastern cultures term as “mindfulness.”

Mindfulness is a time set aside for solitude and reflection that results in one’s personal renewal of spiritual attributes. In Western culture, where time is of the essence and measured by the creating of an end product, mindfulness will be a challenge for leaders to accept or be comfortable with supporting.
Furthermore, this is a highly individualistic activity and will involve allowance for ritualistic practices, prayer, or meditation that is significant for vital spirituality. For others, it might involve activities in nature or other activities that allow students to get connected to their spiritual dimension. The provision of reflective time and space at colleges and universities has the potential to allow students to develop their mindfulness and in doing so nurture their psyche/soul life-world “within.” Spirituality requires consistent opportunities for reflective time and space.

**Social-Servant Action: Students’ Spirituality “Without”**

The charismatic, Marxist political revolutionary, Ernesto “Che” Guevera, once stated, in a mystical context, yet while advocating social-servant action: “Let me say, at the risk of seeming ridiculous, that the true revolutionary is guided by great feelings of love…[in fact] a revolutionary is a person possessed by deep feelings of love”(McLaren, 2000, p. 78). Guevara’s statement sums up nicely the goal of social-servant curricular activities.

Educational leadership must be conscious of the social upheaval and political turmoil that arouse emotion in college students for reform and purposeful action. Compassion is an important characteristic of spirituality. College students should not ignore socioeconomic and political suffering of others. The compassionate person recognizes what others are going through, and is able to articulate an empathetic understanding and sense of mercy. Social-servant action as a curricular activity can assist college students to operationalize their spiritual compassion, empathy, and sense of mercy in objective ways, while also developing a sense of global citizenship.

There is a deep relationship between social-servant action and spirituality and spiritual intelligence that can be viewed as informed reflective action. Social-servant action extends the inner qualities of spirituality into the world “without.”

We would all do well to educate toward a future society and citizenry that views spirituality as making a sacrifice for others that extends beyond their individual needs. Spirituality that is truly meaningful is something greater than self-indulgence.

Given this, educational leadership must provide the vision and explore the possibilities and potentialities for their students to serve as social agents for the greater good globally, socially, communally, and culturally (refer to Diagram 1: Leadership Model for Nurturing Spirituality in Higher Education).

**Closing**

Historically, higher education has been persistent in its resistance to change. We can predict with confidence that there will be resistance to introducing curricular activities that promote students’ spirituality and cultivate SQ development. This is, and will be, a real challenge for future educational leadership. Nevertheless, leadership must be visionary about the emerging issue of students’ need for spiritual development and must empower them to articulate it in the academy within the context of postmodern notions of spirituality and in relation to the modernist conventional idea of institutional religion. The model for nurturing spirituality in higher education through an interdisciplinary, interconnected, and interrelated educational agenda is a prescriptive step in meeting this leadership challenge.

Without question, Western higher education is at the threshold of experiencing a resurgence of spirituality within the domain of intellectuality. As a result, there is a unique opportunity for leadership to expand their vision of the academic canon and students’ intellectual property. Students call for spirituality in their college life-world, and SQ theory has a tendency to be highly abstract and esoteric, and beyond the realm of positivistic analysis. Nevertheless, the need to develop college students’ spirituality is an important challenge. How we address this challenge may be one of the defining legacies of our historical epoch of leadership in higher education.
Diagram 1: Leadership Model for Nurturing Spirituality in Higher Education

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Academic Curricular Activities:

Students' Mind/Body Connection

Reflective Time/Space:
Students’ Spirituality “Within”

Social-Servant Action:
Students’ Spirituality “Without”

References


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