Proposal to Conduct Research

Intelligence and Learning Styles and Approaches – Spiritual Intelligence in Education

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As the world continues to develop, the demand for an educated workforce continues to grow to fulfill the needs of business and society. Never before have there been as many educational institutions of higher education as there are today. These institutions offer diplomas, degrees, and continuing education, all responding to the needs of the geographic area, the demands of the students and parents, the expectations of the discipline, and integrating the mission of the financial backers. But education carries with it many aspects that are not well understood and therefore not taught, sought, or considered. One such aspect is that of Spiritual Intelligence.

Spiritual Intelligence in the Literature

Spiritual intelligence (often abbreviated as SQ) is a form of intelligence that encompasses the intelligences or abilities of Gardner (Gardner, 1983) in such a way as to integrate these intelligences within the human condition and to enable the individual to evolve to a higher level of understanding, functioning, and living. When examined with the understanding that spiritual intelligence is a relatively newly explored concept and the fact that the environment surrounding humans is evolving, spiritual intelligence is envisioned to be the next evolutionary step that assists in the formulation of responses that are unique to the individual. The understanding of the role of spiritual intelligence in new and increasingly complex situations is complex because each individual is unique and the environment is in constant. Thus, actions that were previously successful may be implemented in identical fashion and be unsuccessful because the circumstances, personalities, or situation has changed. Because of the recent recognition of spiritual intelligence, there is debate as to whether this is an evolutionary outcome due to the increasing complex global environment or whether spiritual intelligence has always existed, but not recognized.

Perhaps because of the recency of this topic, there is debate as to the quantifiable-ness of SQ. This is partially due to the fluidity of SQ as an intelligence that is recognized in multiple settings as the “most fundamental of all the intelligences, because it becomes the source of guidance for the others” (Covey, 2004, p.53). As a tool, SQ has been introduced within educational and business environments as a means by which individuals are able to grow and develop in the increasingly rapidly evolving society.

Within business, SQ is envisioned as a means by which the complexity of business can be envisioned in a more holistic and comprehensive manner (Zohar, 2000). With the increasing globalization of business and the consequent increase in the number and complexity of factors that enable global business SQ looks to facilitate the decision making that will not only enhance business but also the environment within which business operates including the operational environment of all stakeholders. The Economist Intelligence Unit (n.d.) notes this environment is changing with the increasing information and communication tools available to consumers reflecting the rapid evolution of technology and the growing number of threats from a larger
marketplace intoning an increasingly diverse and educated competition and an increasingly educated and diverse target population. Together, this nullifies the effectiveness and efficiency of previous business models and modes of decision making (The Economist Intelligence Unit, n.d.). Due to these factors, decision making must combine analysis and intuition in a collaborative environment wherein decision makers are held accountable for their decisions and the effects of the decisions on the business and the business environment (The Economist Intelligence Unit, n.d.). Today, that necessitates the ability to capture and understand an enormous amount of information from the global environment, a daunting task that is facilitated with the use of spiritual intelligence (SQ).

One of the primary authors within SQ is Danah Zohar who negates the religiosity of SQ, but envisions it as reliant upon twelve distinct concepts which are enacted both individually and in conjunction, including: self-awareness; spontaneity; a focus on vision and value led ideas and ideals; the willingness to create and maintain human, business, governmental, environmental, and other inter-relationships within the whole of society; the ability to understand and act in a compassionate manner; the willingness to accept and encourage diversity; a willingness to be independent and/or different from others; the ability to understand and express humility, willingness and openness to seek “why”; the ability to reconceptualize or reframe; the willingness to utilize adversity as a tool for learning and growing; and, a sense of altruism (Zohar, 2000).

However, SQ has been discussed by other authors, such as Robert Emmons (2000) who sees SQ as involving a capacity to transcend the physical or material world potentially by learning to heighten conscious awareness in order to enable or ease the resolution of everyday problems in order to achieve goals. Emmons (2000) begins to cross the line between SQ and religiosity in the discussion of SQ with the inclusion of the need to sanctify everyday experiences and the utilization of spiritual or religious resources in order to achieve the goal. This extends the original premise of Spirituality and diminishes its value and uniting factor due to the variance of beliefs and values incorporated in traditional and non-traditional religions today.

Another author of significance but reminiscent of Goleman (1995) is Vaughan (2002). Goleman (1995) looks to multiple types of intelligence that can be developed and operationalized independently. Vaughan (2002) looks to multiple types of intelligence envisions the need for ultimate integration for optimal application (Gold, 2010). While SQ optimally is viewed as having a positive effect (King, DeCicco, & DeCicco, 2012; Litzsey, 2003), it is also recognized that SQ can be detrimental to not only the individual but all those with whom the individual interacts or has some control over. The linkages between an individual’s physical and mental health are well documented by Wuthnow (1998) and Thoresen (1999). But SQ extends actions beyond the individual’s health to the environment, which in business means the organization and its stakeholders (Stupar & Šahić, 2012).

There are detractors to the concept of a unifying intelligence. Instead, authors such as Howard Gardner’s (1993) have agreed that while intelligence is a multitude of varying kinds of intelligences, there is no unifying umbrella that coalesces these into one basis of belief or action. Instead, Gardner’s (1993) multiple intelligences are quite independent of each other. Gardner
(1993) indicates each individual has his/her own strengths, weaknesses, and constraints which, when combined with the thousands of years of evolution of the brain allow for the survival or elimination of a species or animal within diverse and challenging environments. Because humans have survived, we can argue the human being is constantly adapting him/herself through his/her use of innate and developed intelligences which are operating independently. However, a question arises as to whether, through this development, whether the human being is creating new intelligences dependent upon the environmental influences in order to adapt/ in order to survive. An alternative but equally viable question asks if we recognize these intelligences exist naturally but emerge only when the human being is facing new contexts or environments. If this is the case, does SQ emerge only to facilitate the adaptation and then vanishes or is the intelligence present constantly but is only recognized during times requiring adaptation? There is also room for debate as to whether one intelligence is combined with others to facilitate the adaptation? If the intelligence arises with the occasion, why is spiritual intelligence universal and not ethnic? If the spiritual intelligence is always there but untapped, does it remain with the individual once it is tapped? If it does, does this intelligence then produce leaders due to superior ability to understand and “pull things together? "

Howard Gardner (1999) identified nine forms of intelligence: linguistic, logical/mathematical, musical, spatial, body-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalist and spiritual. He admits that an existential intelligence may exist and captures what individuals mean when they speak of spiritual concerns, such as when people feel "at one" with the universe and tend to create a special link to non-human forces (Gardner, 1999). This being “at one" with the universe requires a form of consciousness that connects the personal and the transpersonal using intrapersonal and interpersonal sensitivity that allows for multiple perspectives bringing to the fore the existence of spiritual intelligence across national and cultural boundaries (Vaughan, 2002).

This form of intelligence has been noted in all cultures, being utilized or accessed by people who are looking for an innovative approach to understanding the inter- and intra-relationships within the world. By extension, therefore, this form of intelligence questions the individual’s relationship to others and to the environment. If using Maslow’s revised hierarchy, it refers to people who have reached transcendence. That is, spiritual intelligence requires a high level of consciousness and a strong desire to acknowledge and respect the need for fairness/equity when relating with others and the environment. They act with a quiet mind orientation, a sense of achievement, high morale, gratitude and a sense of well-being (Zohar and Marshall, 2004, 35-36). Spiritual intelligence is defined as personal capital; that which cannot be measured in money and does not require or anticipate either an immediate interest or self-interest. It appears as a "virtual" capital which deals with "invisible" forces and enables people to recognize values of others (Zohar, 2004). Zohar pointed out this capital is earned by serving significant understanding, a meaningful sense of purpose, and fundamental human values (e.g., Zohar, 2004). It is a personal and intimate process that utilizes self-interest to satisfy the soul, the consciousness to enact in ways that enable facilitation of human rights within a learning environment (Senge, 1990). It is acknowledged that some people may perceive this as something that is not necessary God but certainly powerful. Wigglesworth (2012) defines spiritual
intelligence as “the ability to behave with wisdom and compassion, while maintaining inner and outer peace, regardless of the situation” (p.4-5).

Zohar (2004) underlines that spiritual intelligence "argues the possibility of making a profit, perhaps even more profit, by doing business in a wider context of meaning and value" (p.31). While this is reminiscent of the debate as to the actual earnings difference between ethical stocks and others, our traditional capitalist world tolerates a conception of business which focuses on money, incomes and the bottom line, whether corporate or individual. It ignores traditional virtues of responsibility, integrity, and community (Solomon, 1992). Spiritual intelligence appears, for some people, as a new and necessary adaptation to face the unsatisfactory evolution of the world as portrayed in the day to day operations. It appears as a response to complicated situations for those who believe in and look for a new sphere of relationship and behavior. According to Zohar and Marshall (2000) "motivational and cultural shift happens most readily in times of crisis, when our existing way of going about things has not worked and we and our organization are in a period of instability" (p.180). Spiritual intelligence is a way in which to respond to emergencies and crises (Fowler, 1981), thus performing better financially and socially by innovating our approach/behavior to the context and take profit of it. The ability to develop, integrate, and facilitate the complex situation faced can be compared to a survival skill, a transformative process. It is a solving problem process engaged in when one is facing complexity, instability, or even danger in life or at work. It can be directly linked to a motivational process, a transformative change that empowers the individual and gives him/her credit, self-confidence, and, finally, better performance. The direction of shift is influenced by our motivations. The motivations stem from our deep values which act like "quanta of energy" and bring out the best of human potential (Zohar & Marshall, 2000, p.128).

Robert Emmons defined spiritual intelligence as "a framework for identifying and organizing the skills and competencies needed for the adaptive use of spirituality" (Emmons, 1999, p.163). He also suggested that spiritual intelligence represents an inner-regulatory mechanism to deal with frustrations, temptations, and setbacks (p.159). In that sense, awareness is essential and intimately related with the sense/role one is demonstrating in society or in business.

Intuition as well as motivation and ambition are the primary keys within spiritual attitude, which is caught within specific moments or events to better perform. The adaptive use of spiritual intelligence enables one to speak to the counterpart's “heart” or true self in order to appeal to the spiritual sensitivity and receive positive feedback. The "good" is believed to enhance positive reaction and reward. As such, it can be assimilated /defined as a strategy.

We are all responsible for the society in which we live. We are part of a whole. This responsibility is part of our social identity. Our spiritual intelligence should be considered as a guideline to create a positive dynamic to enhance changes in others' attitude and create opportunities. It is a personal investment in the future which is expected to be effective and potentially profitable if the situation is appropriate. As such, it is not an immediate self-interest but a strategy to make a difference and better perform in the near future. It is the linking
mechanism within human beings who face difficulties without apparent solutions. Spiritual intelligence enables the individual to better understand the context, to better fit within the environment, and, finally, to adapt the answer accordingly with his/her deeper values. The individual's sensitivity and awareness enable this interaction in the spiritual or mental sphere, which acts as a resource, of ultimate energy to solve a problem or facilitate a situation by relying on something bigger, something the individual does not control. It also relies on the individual's sensitivity and spiritual intelligence to act towards a constructive process based on balance, equality and fair attitude for a whole interest.

Methodology

In order to determine if spiritual intelligence is equally present with students of higher education across international boundaries, the author will evaluate the scales that are publicly available to determine the viability of examining the research question of whether or not there is a difference in the understanding and adoption of spiritual intelligence amongst student of higher education institutions in the United States compared to France. A colleague in a French business school (Group Sup de Co, La Rochelle) will be assisting in the administration and scoring of the test as well as co-authoring the paper.

Sampling:
All students will be a minimum of legal age in the appropriate country. The French students are enrolled in a business school and the American students will be enrolled in a business faculty. The survey will be administered via pen and paper in France and administered via a computerized program in America.

Informed Consent:
Participants will be recruited by professors and staff of the appropriate educational institution. In choosing to complete the survey, the student will be giving permission to participate in the survey.

Security of Identity and Data:
All data will be kept confidential and will be stored on a separate drive that is password protected and secure.

Risks to participants have been minimized by the utilization of tested instruments, and by procedures that ensure privacy and confidentiality of participants in the data collection. No personally identifiable data will be collected including the IP addresses or names. Raw data will be reviewed by the researchers for data analysis purposes only.

Significance of the Study

This study will further extend the knowledge of the internationalization of the concept of spiritual intelligence and the understanding of spiritual intelligence within an educational institution. The research is significant to:

1) Educational institutions to design and develop methodologies and course material that will encourage the growth of spirituality among their students;
2) Raise awareness of the identification of spirituality as defined herein to further the research into the psychological, mental, emotional, and intellectual growth of the concept among students and faculty; and

3) Add to a growing body of literature that identifies the benefits and drawbacks of spiritual intelligence such that spiritual intelligence can be developed and used in constructive ways.

Limitations and Delimitations

There are limitations within every research study, and this is no different. The primary limitation to this study is the ability of the students to ignore the request to complete the survey, thus giving results only from those who have the maturity to understand the benefits of this research (the sample would be biased). Limiting the scope of this research to business schools in the United States and France limits the applicability of the results to non-business school students in other countries and in fact to business school students outside the test schools.

Conclusion

Spiritual intelligence is being recognized as a necessary component in developing the growing mind. Too often students graduate from university with limited tools to be applied in the workforce and struggle with the reality they face in the working environment. Schools of higher education need to begin to train students to utilize their spiritual intelligence in order to build networks, facilitate communication, and enhance the global environment. Are schools doing this already without knowing it? The first step to discover this is to determine if the students are both aware of and utilize spiritual intelligence, which is the goal of this study.

Dissemination Plan for the Research

The findings of this research will impact the methodology of teaching as well as potentially the content of the matter taught in business schools. Therefore, the findings of this research will be prepared for publication in an international journal.

Comprehensive Timeline

Following approval of this project by the University of Phoenix and Groupe Sup de Co, La Rochelle, the researcher will begin the research phase. It is estimated that the research will take approximately one year to complete and have published (depending upon the timelines of the publication). The following milestones will be accomplished following acceptance by the IRB:

- Comprehensive literature review (Month 2)
- Structure instrumentation on Survey Monkey (Month 2)
- Distribute information about the survey and ask for completion (Month 2 – 4)
- Collect data from the survey (Month 4 – 5)
Analyze the data (Month 6)
Conclude research writing (Month 6)
Submit articles to conferences (Month 7)
Submit articles to journals (Month 7)
Refine articles (Month 8-10)
Present findings at conferences (Month 10-12)

In addition to these milestones, the researcher will be in contact with the Center for Workplace Diversity, specifically with Dr. Carlos or his designee.

References


