

The Wholistic Educational System: First Principles and Corollary Principles

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The Wholistic Educational System (WES)¹ is a logical, applicable, comprehensive and coherent conceptual framework that can be used to guide educational planning and decision-making. WES contains principles and theories drawn from various fields that guide and impact the educational enterprise: faith systems, philosophy, science, human development and learning, curriculum, teaching, administration, community-institution relations, praxis, and evaluation.²

The following is the set of nine “first principles”³ undergirding the philosophy of WES:

1. Reality consists of material and immaterial entities.
2. The entities composing reality are ordered hierarchically.
3. Entities (with the exception of the unchanging deity) have the capacity to engage in a process of becoming, that is, a process of translating their immaterial potentiality(ies) into material actuality by interacting with other material and/or immaterial entities in their environment.
4. Potentialities are innumerable but may be categorized as being material, social, psychological, or spiritual in nature. (Hence, the system refers to the material potentialities, social potentialities, psychological potentialities, and/or spiritual potentialities of the individual learner or a social group.)
5. The environment is composed of innumerable entities that can be categorized as being material, social, psychological, or spiritual. (Hence, the system refers to the material environment, the social environment, the psychological environment, the spiritual environment, and all of these embodied in the environment of the human self.)
6. All entities have a known aspect, an unknown but knowable (or discoverable) aspect, and an ultimately unknowable aspect.⁴
7. Material entities (which, like immaterial entities, have an aspect of their nature that can also be considered mental, intellectual, or non-actual) are those found in the mineral kingdom, the vegetable kingdom, the animal kingdom (including the human body), and

¹ “The Wholistic Educational System: A Theory and Framework for an International Curriculum” in *The Internationalization of Curriculum Studies: Selected Proceedings from the LSU Conference 2000*, William F. Pinar, ed., (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2003).

² WES draws on a significant body of prior work carried out over several decades by various people including Dr. Daniel C. Jordan and Dr. Donald T. Streets, et. al., Dr. W. Keith Bookwalter; Dr. Elena Mustakova-Possardt; Dr. William Huitt; Mr. Roger Coe; Dr. Alfred North Whitehead; Dr. Malcolm Evans, Dr. Teilhard De Chardin; and Dr. Ervin Lazlo.

³ Two conditions have been sought in the formulation of this set of nine first principles. Firstly that they “hang together” as a whole; one naturally connected to the other; one helping to increase the meaning of the others. Secondly, no first principle can be derived logically from any other. The seven corollary principles are “derived” principles.

⁴ Regarding the latter, this means that the true nature or essence of even the simplest entity – material or immaterial – can never be completely grasped by the human mind.

the technological kingdom, i.e., human-made entities composed of the aforementioned material entities, e.g., machines, technology, and cities.

8. Immaterial entities are social, psychological, and/or spiritual in nature.⁵
9. When an entity interacts with an environment, three complementary sub-processes are activated resulting in the entity's development or becoming:
 - a. Actualization (or "realization") of the entity's potentiality(ies).
 - b. Inclusion (or "absorption," "acquisition," or "positive prehension") of other material and/or immaterial entities into the entity, e.g., socially transmittable knowledge and skills.
 - c. Exclusion of (or "rejection of," "screening out of," "refusal to absorb," or "negative prehension of") other material and /or immaterial entities, e.g., refusal to partake of unhealthy food, to have friends who are a bad influence, or, to engage with mass media that is unwholesome.

The following are seven "corollary principles" that undergird the philosophy of this multidimensional, holistic, integrative, developmental system of education and guide the programs carried out by FEM:

1. There is an inherent harmony amongst the sciences, the humanities, and faith systems, all of which have contributed to the advance of the material, humanistic, and spiritual aspects of prosperity and civilization.
2. One of the main roles of speculative philosophy and process philosophy is the correlation and harmonization of the fields of science, the humanities, and faith systems in such a way that all phenomena – ranging from the most spiritual, to the human, to the most material -- are accounted for within a single scheme of thought.
3. The organic oneness of the human race is manifested by universal characteristics of human growth, maturation, development, and learning that can be enhanced by systems of education that address both the unity and diversity of particular peoples, races, nations, and cultures.
4. Girls and women have the same potentialities as boys and men and, therefore, they should be given the right and opportunity to engage in the same educational curriculum and to pursue the same careers as boys and men. Due to their long history of oppression and exclusion from human affairs outside of the home and due to their particular, biologically determined role in childbirth and infant care, girls and women should receive a special measure of love, encouragement, and consideration by parents, educators, and society in general.
5. Education should be a lifelong process of learning and teaching of the self and others (both individually and collectively) that includes five sub-processes:
 - (1) the identification of personal and social potentialities, that is, immaterial, latent abilities and talents.
 - (2) their translation into material reality, that is, manifest reality or actuality,

⁵ Examples of each category of immaterial entity are set forth in the theory of development.

- (3) the acquisition / “absorption” of worthwhile, socially-transmittable knowledge and skills,
- (4) the “rejection of” or “refusal to absorb” unwholesome knowledge or “refusal to absorb”) unwholesome experiences, and
- (5) the placement of talents, knowledge and skills at the service of the highest good of all things everywhere.
6. Learning is an integral part of human nature. When teachers arrange experiences to allow learning to take on its natural rhythm, it is characterized by three phases: “romance,” “precision,” and “generalization.” In the romance phase learners are able to activate hope-related feelings towards the object of learning. They “see” just enough about what they are about to learn to feel excited about the prospects. During the precision stage learning experiences are broken down into contrastable elements (differentiation) and put together in the same or new ways (integration). The generalization phase refers to the application or transfer of the new integration of experience to new situations.
 7. Human spirituality, in contrast to, but not disconnected from the physical, social, and psychological aspects of human nature, is understood as the yearning to know truth, to love beauty, to act in accordance with one’s understanding of what is good, to be attracted to and to ultimately respond to a growing awareness of higher levels of unity, and to interact with transcendent entities – souls in this life, souls beyond this life, the messengers of the Creator, the holy spirit, and the deity.
 8. Truth and reality are one and do not permit multiplicity. Therefore, science and religion should be in harmony rather than conflict. Science needs religion to lift it above mere materialism and to give it moral guidance and transcendental purposes that seek the highest good of all things everywhere. Religion needs science to verify, whenever possible, its beliefs and principles and to rid it of error and superstition.

(Note: These eight corollary principles are clarified below.)

1. The Harmony of the Sciences, the Arts, and Faith Systems

Science (or sciences), the humanities (especially the arts), and belief systems represent three fields of human endeavor that utilize various combinations and types of reason, experimentation, symbolism, and faith; represent three realms of human knowledge and enterprise that, throughout the history of civilization, have continually illumined humanity’s understanding of the nature and purpose of reality in general and human life in particular. One of the main purposes of education is to operationalize the latest scientific, artistic, and spiritual insights, discoveries, postulates, principles, axioms, theories, and laws for the purpose of enhancing human competence and happiness.

Reality, though material and immaterial in nature, is one, seamless, and whole. It is manifold but not multiple and fragmented. Truth is one and does not admit contradiction or multiplicity. Hence, the sciences, the humanities, and spiritual belief systems reveal different aspects, perspectives, or dimensions of the same reality. The scientific methods of inductive and

deductive investigation are accepted as important ways of finding truth, while recognition is also given to the validity of other ways of knowing and constructing knowledge such as conversation, dreams, prayer, meditation, inspiration, insight, and intuition. If there appears to be contradiction amongst scientific findings, perspectives of the humanities, and belief systems, each serves to illumine and correct the others.

Science is viewed broadly as the intellectual investigation of reality, as comprehension arising out of reason. This understanding is distinct from current tendencies toward scientism, i.e., scientific materialism with an exclusive claim on truth and knowledge via a focus on verification and prediction. Hence, science and the scientific method applied to the various, interconnected entities composing reality results in the physical sciences, the social sciences, the psychological sciences, and spiritual science. Science is amoral in nature and can be used for evil and destruction as well as for the general good. Hence, science needs to be guided by the moral principles and guidance provided by religion so that scientists will undertake only those scientific enterprises that seek the well-being of all things everywhere.

The humanities are considered to be valuable means for supporting the never-ending exploration of and reflection upon such existential themes as the meaning and purpose of human life and more down-to-earth questions of how best to live life in all of its dimensions – biological, emotional, intellectual, social, moral, and spiritual; and how to pursue human happiness in the midst of a world that is at once filled with both beauty and ugliness; friendship and loneliness; love and hatred; hope and despair; amazing achievements and foolish decisions.

The world faith traditions are seen as the relative, historically progressing and continuously unfolding understanding of the link between the Creator and His/Her creatures. This understanding is more profound than and is distinct from the various symbolic, sacred forms and rituals found in each spiritual tradition. Religion needs science to verify, whenever possible, its beliefs and principles and to rid it of error and superstition.

2. Process Philosophy: The Manifold and Unfolding Nature of Reality

Any approach to education (as well as to any scientific inquiry) is colored by one's worldview, philosophy and cosmology. Much of current educational practice is based on an unspoken and unexamined materialistic and mechanistic paradigm, replete with pre-conceptions of the limitations of the individuals to be educated. This results in a factory-type model of education in which curriculum objectives are "riveted" into the learner as s/he moves along the "assembly line" of the grade levels at a predetermined speed. Contemporary education lacks a philosophy broad enough in scope to unify the vast knowledge we have about human growth, maturation development, and learning, and to produce a body of theory that would enable us to provide solutions to the difficult and complex problems facing education as a social enterprise. The philosophy underpinning WES can be referred to as process philosophy, the philosophy of organism, or holism (or wholism). This philosophy breaks away from the reductionistic approach of contemporary education which attempts to explain higher-level phenomena through mechanisms and processes that operate at lower levels of nature. It redefines central concepts of "causality," "unity," and "determinism," and seeks to create a new ethos of education that reflects the organic wholeness of a human being and of human civilization.

Both the world faiths and recent scientific discoveries confirm the hierarchical nature of reality and the organic, systemic interdependence of its spiritual, psychological, social, and biological / material entities. Hence, there is increasing recognition of the need for a shift to an integrated, holistic, multidimensional, developmental approach to education and all human endeavors. Such an approach reintroduces the importance of final causality as distinct from material, efficient, and formal causality. Hence, it differentiates the external environment (e.g., social-economic level), stimulus-response conditioning, and knowledge from intentionality and purpose. It requires that fundamental premises underlying one's scientific and religious views be open for evaluation and revision. The process philosophy undergirding WES strives to articulate and coordinate the relationship amongst faith systems, spirituality, science, educational theory and praxis. The focus of the training it provides is on fostering coherent and comprehensive educational practice that is at once spiritually, philosophically, and scientifically mindful.

Reality has two basic forms or types of entities: material and immaterial. Material or physical entities are those that are actual, observable, detectable, and often measurable. Material reality is characterized by hierarchical structuring as the primary expression of order and beauty in the physical universe. The basic order of the material universe consists of interrelated yet distinguishable ontological levels which are hierarchically arranged – mineral; botanical; zoological; human bodies; and human-made, physical/technological environments. Order in the material realms is dynamic in nature, as novelty perpetually emerges from new integrations of prior elements.

Immaterial entities are those that are non-actual, non-observable, and non-measurable, such as ideas; theories; love; aims; ideals; and the human soul, mind, and spirit. In this philosophy of organism reality is understood as a process consisting of the continual manifestation of potentiality (a major category of immaterial reality) as actuality, i.e., material reality; as a seamless, unbroken chain linking the immaterial, non-actual, spiritual / mental realm with the material, actual, physical realm.

The realization of beauty, truth, goodness, and unity is viewed as the teleology of the universe. Hence, the translation of potentiality into actuality, when guided or lured forward by these four ideals and placed at the service of the world, is the highest expression of that teleology.

Education is a process of human becoming via such sub-processes as growth, maturation, development, and learning. Human beings are viewed as having an intrinsic yearning to know; to learn; to love; to be loved; to be competent; to exercise their will; and to be attracted to and speculate about the unknown, transcendental, and spiritual aspects of creation. Human beings are viewed as capable of escaping the limitations of mere materiality by virtue of their ability to direct the process of their own becoming, patterning the use of energy available to them by consciously entertaining the infinite range of possibilities (potentialities) open to them, and by choosing to open this process to such worthy influences as scientific research, cultural wisdom, rationality, intuition, and divine guidance. These types of yearning and this striving to go beyond one's self are manifested in day-to-day life as curiosity, interest, the seeking of warm human relations, a longing to commune with and worship the Transcendental, the setting and achievement of goals, and a willingness to make sacrifices to reach those goals. In the field of education, these proclivities of human nature are capitalized on for motivational purposes. This

wholistic, educational philosophy enables learners to realize that they are a microcosm of the universe because they embody all aspects of the universe. That is, they are, at once, material beings composed of water and minerals; biological beings that grow and reproduce; warm-blooded mammals with sense perception; social / gregarious beings that yearn to love and be loved; psychological beings with hopes, fears, language, a sense of history, ideas, questions, and goals; and spiritual beings that have a soul that finds it natural to relate to and commune with the Transcendental in life and that, according to many faith systems, continues to exist in spiritual realms after the death of the body. This philosophy also enables learners to see themselves as not only the most highly evolved entity in the world, but as the vehicle for the further evolution of society as it progresses from one level of unity to another; from the clan, to the tribe, to the city-state, to the nation, to the region, and finally, hopefully, in the not-too-distant future, to a united, just, and peaceful world society and civilization.

3. The Organic Oneness of the Human Race

A corollary of the principle of the oneness of reality is the essential, organic oneness of the human race. All of the sciences -- anthropology, biology, organic chemistry, genetics, genealogy, sociology, cognitive psychology, and neurology -- after testing theories such as cranium size as an indicator of racial superiority -- now confirm the principle of the organic oneness and interrelatedness of humankind. This principle implies that no race, nation, or sex is inherently better than any other and that human health, maturation, development and learning have the same fundamental characteristics regardless of geographic location. This finding supports the possibility of creating a universal system of education which will take into account both the unity and the diversity of the peoples it serves. The principle of the oneness of humankind acknowledges that there are certain categories of human potentiality and certain developmental universals which are possessed by all people alike while, at the same time, acknowledging the highly unique manifestation of these capacities and talents in each culture and in each individual. This corollary principle also implies that there are basic, fundamental bodies of knowledge which are so universal in importance that they deserve to be acquired by everyone everywhere while simultaneously encouraging the acquisition and production of a wide diversity of local, regional, and national knowledge and culture.

4. The Equality of Women and Men

A corollary principle of the organic oneness of the human race is the equality of women and men; of girls and boys. Just as the sciences have found no one race to be inherently superior to another; so, too, they have found no sex to be inherently superior to the other. Science now confirms the basic equality of men and women as regards intellectual capacity and the ability of women, when given equal educational and vocational or professional opportunities, to make significant contributions in virtually all fields of human endeavor. The issue of women being not only allowed but also encouraged to enter fields traditionally dominated by men needs to begin in the home and the school. For instance, in governmental positions in which human lives is at stake, the greater participation of women could contribute to the favoring of peace over war; of diplomacy over aggression. The issue of women receiving the same economic compensation for the same work performed is also one that needs to be addressed in educational institutions in order to increase the consciousness of both sexes of the need for greater fairness and justice. As long as girls and women are viewed as inferior or as objects rather than full contributors with

men to human affairs, problems of female slavery, sex abuse, discrimination, and others will continue.

5. The Educational Process

As stated above, education should be

a lifelong process of learning and teaching of the self and others (both individually and collectively) that includes five sub-processes: (1) the identification of personal and social potentialities, that is, latent abilities, strengths, and talents, (2) their translation into actuality (or manifest reality), (3) the acquisition / “absorption” of worthwhile, socially-transmittable knowledge and skills, (4) the “rejection of” or “refusal to engage in or absorb”) unwholesome experiences, and (5) the placement of knowledge and skills at the service of the highest good of all things everywhere.

These processes are not necessarily sequential. They usually occur simultaneously.

Regarding the first sub-process, potentialities are latent talents and abilities of a physical, social, psychological, and/or spiritual nature. Human abilities are continually being analyzed, mapped out, and refined. Human beings are endowed with special abilities commonly known as talents, gifts, or strengths. At the personal level, it is the task of educators, with the assistance of the learner, his/her family, and the community, to identify these and then build an educational program to develop them. At the social level, it is the responsibility of leaders to identify the special potentialities of a family, group, an institution, a people, a population, and/or a region and then build educational and social-economic development projects around these. That is, both individuals and collectivities have particular potentialities that need to be actualized (or brought into being) by the educational process for the benefit of the world.

Development (sub-process 2) is defined as the process of translating potentialities (which immaterial in nature) into actuality (which is material in nature). This occurs through the interaction of the learner with the environment (which has physical, social, psychological, and spiritual aspects) either independently or under the guidance of a teacher, instructor, or trainer. In WES potentialities and how they are to be translated into actuality, have been mapped out as the “process curriculum.” Because each learner’s development has a particular rhythm and pace and each learner has different instructional needs, WES, in contrast to the “factory assembly line” model of education, proposes a “garden” model of education in which the teacher / gardener gives each learner / plant “what s/he needs, when s/he needs it, for as long as s/he needs it.” Although there is a structured sequence of learning objectives, the curriculum is, to a great extent, determined by a diagnosis of the needs, strengths, talents, and readiness of the learner.

As potentialities are being converted into manifest reality or actuality, there is usually a simultaneous acquisition of socially-transmittable knowledge and skills that are common to the culture (sub-process 3). In WES this body of knowledge has been designated as the “content curriculum.” It includes information, concepts, and skills that are local, regional, national, and universal in nature. It is usually transmitted through symbols systems such as mathematics, language, and the arts which comprise a corollary curriculum strand.

The fourth sub-process is the learner's "rejection" or "refusal to absorb" undesirable entities, that is, unwholesome food, friendships, knowledge, experiences, habits, etc. in the environment. This process is of the utmost importance and is often neglected or relegated to the "hidden curriculum." In WES it is made more explicit and conscious in the educational process.

Concerning the fifth sub-process, once latent abilities have become manifested, refined, and polished through learning and teaching, it is the task of educators to place them at the service of the world. Hence, service education is highly important. The ideal of "always seeking the highest good of all things everywhere" requires educators to enable students to become "morally conscious, global citizens" whose service projects should not be only social in nature but should also include projects in such fields as forestry, animal care, and all aspects of environmental sustainability.

6. The Rhythm of Learning

Learning is part of human nature. When teachers arrange experiences to allow learning to take on its natural rhythm it is characterized by three phases: "romance," "precision," and "generalization." They describe a natural pattern of learning during an individual lesson, unit, and across several years of a learner's life.

Romance is a motivational stage during which hope-related emotions are associated with the object of learning. "Glimpses" of what is to be learned generate curiosity, interest, and a desire for mastery.

Precision emphasizes the acquisition of declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge that includes skills. It consists of two sub-processes – differentiation and integration. Differentiation is the ability to break down experience, whether internal or external, into separate, contrastable elements. Integration is the ability to combine those elements in the same way or in a new way thereby providing new information, new feelings, new skills, and new perceptions which may or may not become expressed immediately in some form of overt behavior.

Generalization is the ability to utilize the recombination of integrated elements in other situations. It is the stage of mastery during which the learner feels the satisfaction of being able to apply newly acquired knowledge and skills in new ways thereby returning to a highly motivating phase but one which is now based on a feeling of competence.

7. Human Spirituality

Human spirituality is one of the characteristics that distinguish humans from animals. One aspect of human spirituality is the ability of humans to formulate abstract concepts that represent immaterial entities and to symbolize and interact with these in various ways. These symbols, which can be scientific, linguistic, artistic, or religious in nature, in turn, help to guide, inspire, or give direction to the translation of potentiality into actuality. Immaterial entities can even be termed spiritual in nature. That is, they cannot be directly perceived or measured, but their existence can be proven indirectly by observing their impact on the material world. For example, designer clothing exists first as an idea or imagination in the mind of the designer. The proof of

the existence of the abstract design is its entering the material world as a unique article of clothing. Other examples of important, immaterial entities are ideals such as beauty, truth, goodness, and unity; aims, purposes, theories, souls, human relations, Prophets, and the Ultimate Reality commonly referred to as God. Humans are able to conceive these entities, to give them symbolic representations as substitutes for them, to speculate about them, to interact with them, to feel intense love towards them, and to even make personal sacrifices for them in order to bring them more fully into their lives and the lives of others.

Another aspect of human spirituality, the very existence of which is impossible to conclusively prove, is the faith-based understanding of the existence of the human spirit or soul; an immaterial entity that, according to numerous faith systems, continues to exist after death; is capable of travelling into other times and places and to converse with other human souls during sleep; and is endowed by the Creator with an innate attraction to and desire to interact with the Ultimate Reality and with other spiritual entities that transcend the material world.

Conclusion

From this wholistic perspective, the well-being of every created thing and eco-system on planet earth depends on the human race's ability:

- To become whole, well-rounded, and balanced, and, thereby, become wholesome, healthy, happy, and prosperous rather than fragmented and disunited resulting in the current reality of conflict, war, genocide, racism, greed, poverty, disease, and disillusion.
- To gain a wholistic perspective of reality in which all creatures and eco-systems are viewed as being interconnected, interdependent, and having a manifold yet seamless nature; one that is at once physical, social, psychological, and spiritual; and
- To embrace the vision of a culturally diverse yet organically united world as the next, natural, and necessary phase of social evolution on planet earth.