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# New Approaches in Social and Humanistic Sciences

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## Spiritual Intelligence Paradigm - Formative Values and Targets for Teachers-to-Be

Florentina BUCUROIU<sup>1</sup>

### *Abstract*

*The paper presents the results of a psychological and pedagogical study meant to reveal the importance and the shaping value of the spiritual intelligence on the formation/development of the human personality. The theoretical part of the paper presents scientific bases, significations, meanings and orientations regarding the status and structure of the spiritual intelligence. The practical part of the research pursued two objectives:*

*- a survey of the teachers-to-be` perceptions on the personalized understanding of the concept, of their own explorative and self-reflexive behavior generated consequent to applying the Fr. Vaughan questionnaire - which is designed to identify the coefficient of spiritual intelligence; the discussions were also focused on those ways of the spiritual intelligence defined by Zohar and Marshall;*

*- analysis of the reflections of those students participating into this study, on the qualities associated with spiritual intelligence in relation to age, gender, level of education and culture, spiritual maturity, personal experiences, and their opinions on the formative strategies that contributed, on different stages of life, to valuing some transpersonal ways and to understanding the extent to which spiritual intelligence manifests itself in everyone's life.*

*The conclusions of this report highlight the theoretical and explanatory aspects with regard to understanding spiritual intelligence, characteristics and areas of positive forming and development, spiritual paths that have personalized relevance for the young students who took part into our research. The reflections of the respondents and their analysis – that was made together with experts - outline different perspectives on the internalizing of some spiritual values, and on the understanding of the personal experiences, of their own life style, reactions and behaviors, emotions, as well as the great influence of the interpersonal relationships on acquiring higher degrees of spiritual maturity etc.*

**Keywords:** *spiritual intelligence; holistic vision; empathy; personal transformation; teachers-to-be` SQ*

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## 1. Introduction

Spiritual Intelligence (SQ) is an increasingly used concept, either in association with the religious doctrine or completely dissociated from it, as a special type of intelligence, superior to all others, as it provides a much wider perceptual and interpretation angle, more complex in solving problems. SQ is the intelligence that puts creativity at the service of discovering general human values. Spiritual Intelligence - SQ exists in each of us, but without awareness and cultivation of it, we will not have full control of our thinking and living, of our emotions, of those "details" that color and lead our lives and activity. Spiritual Intelligence (SQ) helps us evaluate both our own emotions and the emotions of others so that we can have appropriate and beneficial reactions to both parties. Giving proper meanings to events, looking for peace, harmony, empathizing with people, and not choosing mean ways to solve problems is valuing the spiritual intelligence that exists in each of us. Under these circumstances, the present paper is meant to give answers to some questions that refer to the possibility of using the virtues of SQ in the educational domain by means of the school teachers who should promote flexibility, creativity and empathy within the class context.

We consider this topic very important in point of raising interest in SQ among those students who prepare to become pre-primary and primary school teachers. Once they are made aware of this side of their mission in schools, new directions for self-development and holistic educational approaches are being opened and both the school pupils and the teachers take advantage. That is why we promote the idea that introducing a few workshops on this topic during the university studies would be highly beneficial in any corner of the world.

## 2. Problem Statement

Over time, intellectual, rational intelligence – IQ – was surrounded and even over passed in popularity by other types of intelligence, defined and explained by researchers, according to various criteria of classification.

Howard Gardner (1993) developed a theory on the multiple intelligences that evolve and manifest independently in any individual. Whereas a man can be proficient in one domain, he can be completely deficient in another one. [1]

Daniel Goleman (1995) carried out a research on emotional intelligence, starting from the frames of intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence. He concluded that people who are successful in many areas of

life are endowed with both emotional skills and cognitive capacities. [2] “Emotional intelligence includes self-awareness and self-control, as well as the ability to get along well with others. Getting along with others implies an ability to listen, to communicate, to accept feedback, and to empathize with different points of view.” [4]

The third “Q” type, Spiritual intelligence – SQ – “is the necessary foundation for the effective functioning of IQ and EQ. It is the superior instance of our intelligence.” [6]

SQ level determination takes into account issues related to:

- spontaneous flexibility/adaptability
- self-consciousness
- the ability to make suffering work for our benefit
- refusing to hurt others consciously
- the holistic approach to the happenings/events that occur in our lives
- the ability to see beyond appearances and judge people and situations according to clearly defined systems of values

Spiritual intelligence is a type of intelligence that everyone can develop relatively independently and to a great extent. The present study wants to reveal the particular directions this SQ can follow within school environment.

In point of education, it helps a teacher use his mind and spirit to better cope with the outer world, with his students, their families and colleagues particularly. His previous spiritual experiences may define the way he approaches teaching and team work attitude generally, and contribute to his personal holistic development. Moreover, beneficial spiritual choices are a sign of high level spiritual intelligence and the positive effects pour over group/class members like a cool summer rain. A spiritually intelligent teacher will create/educate spiritually intelligent students, who use clear and fair discernment in making decisions and reacting to various learning and life experiences. A pre-school or primary-school teacher, for example, is supposed to form, to shape a complete human being in point of cognition, emotiveness and motility. If he does not cultivate his own spiritual intelligence, he will not be aware of the others` needs in this respect and will never find the best way to lead them to whole development. A teacher has to see beyond appearances, to be one step ahead of the difficulties that may arise by means of abandoning jaundice and promoting open-mindedness and kindness. All these qualities reside in any educator`s SQ level more than in his IQ number.

### 3. Research Questions/Aims of the research

In the context of the contemporary socio-educational context, any teacher should consider permanently correlating the acquisitions he has acquired during the initial training with the general and specific competences that the dynamics of the educational process imposes for the purpose of a correct valorization and self-perfecting. But the occupational standards for the position of educator also stipulate that: “It is the purpose of the educator to allow each child to follow his personal path of evolution, providing support for his integration into social life and school activity. Even the name of the “educator” occupation, highlights the fact that the educator must be a model of civilized, ethical and moral behavior, language and emotional balance.” [5] All these qualities/endowments of an educator/teacher reside both in his/her SQ and IQ. Most of the students who prepare to be educators/teachers have never considered this side of their professional and human development. The reflections of the respondents will outline different perspectives consequent to spiritual values internalizing throughout their personal life experiences, and will also underline the influence of the interpersonal relationships on acquiring higher degrees of spiritual maturity etc.

That’s why the present study is meant to quantify the teachers-to-be` level of spiritual intelligence – based on Frances Vaughan`s questionnaire - and invite them all to a group focus in order to make everyone aware of the importance of cultivating SQ throughout the coaching teaching period and afterwards.

### 4. Research Methods

There were two target groups of teachers-to-be: the former was composed of 24 students in the first year of academic studies, and the latter was made of 28 students in the third year (preparing for graduation). All of them – between the ages of 20 and 37 - belonged to the Pre-school and Primary-school Pedagogy program of study. 67% were under 30 years old and out of this category 39% were around 20 years old.

The methodology brought together enquiry based on the questionnaire, collection and interpretation of the data, group focus with reflections on the scientific literature referring to the manifestations related to the SQ level.

The purpose of the analysis was to identify the level of SQ among the teachers-to-be, while the discussions on the questionnaire results and on their own spiritual experiences intended to approach those aspects specific

to the educational process and to the teacher-learner communication relationships as well. The manner they interpret them will define their future development of teaching attitudes and behavior.

## 5. Findings

The questionnaire data analysis revealed the following aspects:

- 96% of the respondents stated that they are flexible and ready to cope with the situation
- 93% can react spontaneously when dealing with new situations
- 94% benefit of a high level self-consciousness
- 82% are able to understand and over pass physical and psychological pain
- 69% agreed that all the rules have some truth; this perspective, they try to understand the members of various confessions as well
- 89% proved to be equally interested in their inner and outer life
- 93% look for a meaning and a goal in life
- 74% their ideas about good and evil, right and wrong are more nuanced than common ones: they are not only in black and white, they also contain gray
- 82% find obstacles all the time in their spiritual development, but they manage to overcome them
- 68% think divinity gives them the things they need
- 57% feel that they are given with a number of special qualities
- 62% have healed the false beliefs they have taken from their family or culture
- 84% stated that the world often remarks their playful and childlike nature
- 77% stated that if they want to understand what's going on, they put things in a general perspective
- 74% live their lives with joy and optimism
- 81% stated that when they recognize higher spiritual values in others, they are aligning themselves with those
- 65% considered that everything they do is finally becoming good for others
- 74% love all beings and do not hurt them
- 68% sacrifice their personal needs to do their best for others, be they strangers
- 72% always have time to help others

- 62% spend their money or material resources when they have to help others
- 59% take the life and the world as they are, without wanting to change them

The focus group was carried out in the presence of another two professors, experts in educational sciences, and it followed the Frances Vaughan's list of qualities that mainly define the SQ of any people. Beside this, the debate took into consideration those qualities associated with spiritual intelligence in relation to the students' professional aspirations.

## 6. Discussions

After a careful analysis of the answers given by the students, we insisted on making the analyzed contexts clear by supporting them with consistent arguments and personal life experiences.

Everyone agreed with the fact that SQ manifests itself in everyone's life, no matter their age, gender, level of education.

Some of the students correlated the high level SQ of the old generations with the deeper religious significance they used to give to every experience. They also stressed the idea that the nowadays generation has distanced itself from the feeling of belonging to a religious cult and has lost the guidelines of communion with the divinity and the fellows around. This is why teachers should be included in that "category of specialists who would need training in spiritual counseling for more efficient professional work". [3]

Most of the students believe in the idea of a pre-established life course but they don't exclude their freedom of choice in everyday actions. They feel themselves permanently watched by a permissive superior spirit and they are generally ashamed of their deeds.

The sense of duty is very important in any domain of work in their opinion, and it is particularly defining in the educational sector, where some children expect their teachers to be god-like mentors. Teachers are not "allowed" to make any type of mistakes because these could greatly influence the general becoming of their disciples.

The students who took part into the focus group also decided on a list of definitely important qualities a teacher-to-be should be endowed with in point of spiritual intelligence:

- Flexibility and positivity in thinking and acting
- Spontaneity and open-mindedness
- Self-consciousness
- Psychological and physical resistance
- Faith in God
- Religious and diversity tolerance
- Empathy and altruism
- Preoccupation for spiritual growth
- Preoccupation for professional growth
- Generosity and inner balance

## 7. Conclusions

Consequent to the questionnaire results and to the discussions following the data collection (brainstorming session), some conclusions appeared as crystal-clear and relevant to the topic approached: a gifted teacher is a harmonious holder of both spiritual and professional qualities, knowledge and skills.

He is more than a skilful lesson plans designer; he knows how to create a comfortable learning environment, he is the mental and emotional balance of the group, an essential cohesion element. He turns school experience into a positive life-launching opportunity through the way he interacts with his students.

An appropriate professional appearance and conduct is also of great importance as long as it is well-known that the teachers are seen as life-models for their students.

A high SQ level would therefore be required and worth cultivating all through the teaching-learning process at any moment and in any place.

## 8. Acknowledgement

I declare on my own responsibility that the subjects participating in the research have been informed of the voluntary nature of participation in the research, the understanding of the information received and the understanding that the withdrawal from the research can be done at any time without any negative consequences on the participant. The present research has respected the ethical standards of research. The participants/family members of the research participants have given their consent to participate into the research.

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