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6/ ABSTRACT OF PAPER

In this paper, I introduce some of the assumed relationships between morals, religion and spirituality, noted in literature about educational leadership. The paper begins by discussing how “structural rigidity” in the public school system has resulted in problems for educational leaders wanting to be flexible and teach certain values. Then the text addresses how a dysfunctional orderliness conserved within the public school system has resulted in attempts to keep morals, religion and spirituality separate. After discussing some of the relationships between the three terms, the paper examines the evolution of various ideologies related to education and legislation, such as the Charter or Rights and Freedoms. The paper ends with an outline of two leadership models, which could bridge the gaps between spirituality, religion and morals, by proposing a fresh vision of educational leadership.

**RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MORALS, RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY
IN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS**

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Introduction

In this paper, I introduce some of the assumed relationships between morals, religion and

spirituality, noted in literature about educational leadership. The paper begins by discussing how “structural rigidity” in the public school system has resulted in problems for educational leaders wanting to be flexible and teach certain values. Then the text addresses how a dysfunctional orderliness conserved within the public school system has resulted in attempts to keep morals, religion and spirituality separate. After discussing some of the relationships between the three terms, the paper examines the evolution of various ideologies related to education and legislation, such as the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The paper ends with an outline of two leadership models, which could bridge the gaps between spirituality, religion and morals, by proposing a fresh vision of educational leadership.

Affects of structural rigidity in school systems on morals, spirituality and religion

Seeking ways to wake up the spirits of students and teach them about morality and religion in ways that do not violate family beliefs or constitutional principles is a major challenge for public school educators. Acknowledging that morals, religion and spirituality are all associated with the goodness and badness of human character and principals of right and wrong does not give them freedom to share this holistic viewpoint with students or co-workers. Educational leaders’ reluctance to speak of morals or values associated with religion and spirituality “has amputated . . . public discourse at the knee . . .” Although most educators have a moral sense they “have tried to talk themselves out of it” (Wilson, 1997, p. xi). Despite the fact the original intent of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms introduced in 1982 was to protect the country from establishing any specific religion or dogma, the results of such legislation has been a “structural rigidity of education” (Watkinson, 1999, p. 40) that does not leave room for flexibility in approaches to teaching.

This structural rigidity of education has led to a “spiritual vacuum” and “moral erosion” (Hawley, 1995) along with “religious illiteracy” (Sweet, 1997) within the public school system. Under the guise of the reasoning behind the rules of charter, the system fails to demonstrate any connection between morals, religion and spirituality, which creates confusion for both educators and students on how they affect one’s values. “But it is the spiritual dimension of children’s lives more than any other that has been excluded from school life” (Lantieri, 2001, p. 23), despite the charter’s intent to “guarantee and protect

. . . the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms it enshrines” (Watkinson, 1995). All individuals have spirituality, whether they are religious or not; it is a by-product of evolution, located on the “third neural system in the brain” (Lantieri, 2001, p. 17). A person’s spirituality can be viewed as “Spirit-in-action, God in the making . . . the entire process of unfolding itself . . . which becomes conscious of itself” (Wilber, 1996, p. 10) when evoked and recovered by teachings about religious and moral stand points (Lantieri, 2001). Although spirituality transcends morals and religion, they are part of the process of Spirit-in-action and God in the making.

For the sake of this paper, morals are based on people’s sense and beliefs of what is right and wrong in their conduct; religion is a particular system of faith, belief and worship that can bind people together as community. And although spirituality contains common elements of all religions, such as love and compassion, it is a higher state of consciousness, which gives a sense of the sacred and inner peace.

Conserving a dysfunctional orderliness

Some educators’ reluctance to acknowledge the connection between spirituality, religion and morals may be one factor impeding healthy systemic growth within the public education system and conserving a dysfunctional orderliness, resulting in many social problems. Headlines about violence in schools, such as: “First-grader opens fire in school: Boy, 6 Kills Classmate” (Calgary Sun, 2000, p. 1), and “Stabbed teen’s plea to life-save: don’t let me die” (Calgary Sun, 2001, p. 1) on the front pages of some newspapers demonstrate how schools across North America are plagued by a multitude of moral and spiritual issues ranging from violence, to crime, to alcohol and drug abuse. Although school boards implement programs to combat these issues, they often lack a spiritual component and are met with failure. Like sticks anchored in a river, the programs may slightly obstruct the progression of such moral problems but never appear to bring them to a halt. To turn the systemic river upside down and alter its direction, some changes of visions in public education that recognize the relationship between spirituality, religion and morals could be required. “A one-size-fits all standardized system of education may have been useful during the industrial age, but will not be adequate to prepare our children for living together in the new millennium” (Watkinson, 1999, p. 11).

Perhaps adopting the ideology that we are spiritual beings having human experiences, rather than human beings in search of spirituality, could challenge some common views on educational leadership and curriculum development. Currently, the “liberal economic” model allegedly ruling the public school system seems to reflect the main goal of a genetic researcher who strives to produce apples from an orange tree. Like an apple, attempting to grow on a foreign orange tree, a student can lose sight of his/her spiritual roots and true identity while adapting to a dysfunctional school system. As stated by Watkinson (1999), “schools in Canada . . . are . . . governed by a traditional authoritarian model that expects children to adapt or fit within the school environment” (p. 39). Some consequences of such an educational system appear to be alcohol and drug abuse, along with violence and crime within the student population. By not nurturing students’ spirituality, public schools run the risk of raising a generation of youth who lack the wisdom and connectiveness they require to live a healthy moralistic, spiritual life (Lantieri, 2001).

We waited for young people to really get in trouble, even kill each other, before we responded with programs to create safe schools. I hope we have learned from that past not to wait for more and more young people to lose their sense of meaning and purpose before we invite (spirit), soul into education. (p. xiv).

The tragedies of fatal shootings involving students at Columbine High School and a Taber school have led some educators and spiritual leaders to address their concerns about removing religion from the public school system (Fenn, 2000; Lantieri, (2001). These “horrific” examples of violence in schools demonstrate the moral consequences of taking God out of the educational system. Before the Charter of Rights, and other government legislation, school days commenced with Bible reading and the Lord’s prayer. At that time, the Ten Commandments were part of the moral code. Fenn (2000) suggests:

spiritual influences were present within our educational system in the early days.

But God and prayer have been taken out of the classroom and evil has flooded in. We think we can solve the problem with legislation. No. Our problem is spiritual and we must return to God and the Bible. . . . Will we wait for tragedy to strike or will we return to God. (p. 22)

During the tragedy April 20, 1999 at Columbine High School, students turned to God and prayer was brought back to the school where previously it had been outlawed (Fenn, 2000). “As students took refuge, under tables, as Erick and Dylan sprayed the room with bullets- prayer was offered-and no legislator or politician could stop it” (p. 22). This could be viewed as an example of students’ spirituality being awakened, when they sensed that it was more important to pray than to follow school policies. During this tragedy they may have learned about the relationship between religion spirituality and morals, and gained insight about the downfalls of certain school laws.

After the tragedy at Columbine High School, a parent of one of the victims forwarded a poem to some government leaders stating:

your laws ignore our deepest needs. Your words are empty air. You’ve stripped away
our heritage. You’ve outlawed simple prayer. Now gunshots fill our classrooms.
And precious children die. You seek for answers everywhere. And ask the nation, ‘why?’
You regulate restrictive laws through legislative creed and yet you fail to understand
that God is what we need. (cited in Fenn, 2000, p. 22)

In response to this poem, Fenn states “no amount of legislation can change our hearts or our nation. Only God can do that. The nation is changed one heart at a time” (p.22). His statement suggests that a relationship between religion, spirituality and morals exists.

The relationship between Christianity, spirituality, and morals

Henry (2000) states that educators need to acknowledge “the profound relationship between the moral, the religious, and the spiritual” (p. 6). Religious and spiritual insights provided some of the earliest roots of moral leadership. In the new millennium, educators must continue to acknowledge that law is central to morality. “Even though there will always be new situations not envisioned by the law, there are certain unchangeable principles of right action which are almost universally held. They form the bedrock of moral action” (p. 4). These principles include: “do good and avoid evil; do to others as you would have them do to you; live not by lies; love and do what you will” (p. 4).

Aside from associating morals with religion, Henry (2000) suggested that moral principles do

not depend solely on a particular religious belief. There are laws written in the hearts of individuals, which is their spirituality, and to enable these ordinances to become personal principles of action, leaders need to help educate a student's conscience. "The education of conscience is essential to growth to maturity and is life-long. It takes place through the influence of, and personal reflection on experience" (p. 4). Children are pilgrims on a journey towards finding peace and a sense of connection with God. They are innately spiritual beings, in need of guidance while on a pilgrimage. Educators can teach a moral way of life by informing the conscience through proclamation, instruction, public debate, and "particularly by example" (p. 5).

Thom (2001) suggests conscience can be informed a spiritual framework that assists educators to deal with family, gender, visible minorities, violence and alcohol and drug abuse issues. To establish morals, one's conscience needs to be educated with "Godly concepts such as grace, faith, compassion and forgiveness. . . ." (p. xx). Christ modelled a healthy sense of "personal conscience" while in a leadership role; his "stories were an invitation to every listener to feel free to develop a private moral integrity . . ." (Barton, 1987, p. 16). As an ideal interpreter of life, conscience is an inner voice informing individuals what is right and wrong, and therefore setting a moral base.

Henry's (2000) and Thom's (2001) viewpoints of the relationships between religion, spirituality and morals is ideal, if their educational leadership models focus on Jesus, as a spiritual leader, modelling morals and spirituality. "Jesus Christ manifested a particular style of leadership, today commonly referred to as servant leadership. He did not come as . . . a great political strategist He came as a humble servant" (Williams, 2000, p. 63). Jesus demonstrated by his own example how "moral purity may be attained" (Kerston, 1994, p. 10). Although he sought to create an immediate link between God and humankind, "the love of one's neighbour and tolerance he taught have been replaced by self-righteous fanaticism" (p. 4) and church bureaucracies. Churches are filled with people who can win Bible trivia contests, but who do not understand what Jesus truly stood for. When Jesus became "managed, monopolized and codified" by churches, his voice became replaced by "narrow minded and rigidly dogmatic beliefs" (p. 4). Church leaders forgot that in his spiritual approach to leadership, Jesus "focussed more on connection than correction. He knew that when the connections (between people)

grow strong, so would the desire the do the right thing” (Arterburn & Felton, 2000, p. 19). However, after Jesus became bureaucratized by churches, the public education system gradually weeded Him out of the curriculum, which may have resulted in a loss of clarity on some moral issues and a loss of connection between spirituality and religion.

Difference between learning about religion and indoctrination

Canada’s Native population could identify with how Jesus became bureaucratized by Christian churches. Historically, the education system has been noted for the institutionalized suppression of equal opportunities for Natives, under the ruling of Christian values (Hagedorn, 1990). For example, the Native principle of protocol focussed on the value of ceremonies and prescribed rules about how to behave. However, non-Native school administrators did not consider the value of Native ceremonies and until 1952, it was illegal to practice Native spirituality in the schools. Discriminatory attitudes toward Natives led to the oppression of the children who attended residential schools (Hagedorn, 1990). The residential schools insulated Native children from the influences of their own people and subjected them to a program designed to lead them away from who they were while adopting the ways and values of their teachers (Comeau & Santon, 1990). Children were known to scrub themselves for hours to remove their brown colour, in an attempt to become “de-Indianized.” This was a form of acculturation, where as a culturally diverse group, they were being forced to acquire the behaviours of another cultural group to gain access to and function as part of the Christian group (Comeau & Santon, 1990). Forcing Christianity on the native culture was an example of church bureaucracies and schools indoctrinating students, which could be perceived as an immoral and anti-spiritual approach to educational leadership. Perhaps, if the Native students would have been taught about Jesus, as a model of love, kindness and forgiveness, instead of being indoctrinated with Christianity, they may have gained important insights on moral and spiritual values.

Regulations resulting in moral, spiritual, and religious illiteracy

Having no context which educators or students in the public school system can acknowledge

theirs or other's religious views has led to spiritual, religious and moral illiteracy in the public school system (Sweet, 1997). Giving young people an awareness of the different religious beliefs of others could encourage them to discover their own. Non-supporters of religion in the classroom have difficulty understanding that education about God is not value-less; although religious education can indoctrinate, education about religion can illuminate (Sweet, 1997). As stated by Watkinson (1999) "schools need to be places that neither inculcate nor inhibit religion. Religious conviction should be treated with respect" (p. 13).

As stated by Sweet (1997):

we've gone from times when the religious were often intolerant of the non-religious. . . . to a day, when it is those who hold religious convictions who are subjected to societal intolerance. It's often implied that anyone holding a religious belief system must be either brainwashed, intellectually challenged, or in direct need of a psychological crutch (p .7).

The Latin root word of "religion" means "that which binds us together as people or community" (Williams, 2000, p. 65). As Sweet (1997) states, educational leaders attempting to free children from religious indoctrination, by excluding the topic in the public school system, may have resulted in "throwing out the baby with the bath water" (p. 12). Keeping religion out of the public system may be why "hundreds of thousands of parents reject public education in favour of schools that ghettoise their children on the basis of religion" (Sweet, 1997, p. ix). Because educators are responsible for "teaching habits of the mind and habits of the heart" (Sergiovanni, 1996, p. xii), these parents may want their children to learn about morality, within a religious and spiritual framework found in the schools.

Examining moral frameworks in education

Gilligan (1982) compares two moral orientations that affect how educators perceive moral issues. When individuals endorse a "justice perspective", the focus is on autonomy, individualism and

competing rights and rules; whereas, if people operate within a “care perspective”, their concerns are on cooperative relationships, connection, caring and empathy. Thus, even if an educator followed the justice perspective and violated no rights, he/she could maltreat a student. While a justice perspective is based on the premise that everyone should be treated equal, the care perspective is built on the belief that hurting others should be avoided. On the other hand, Strike, Haller and Soltis (1988) suggest there are three basic frameworks that influence an educator’s approach to moral problems. While a “consequentialist” position leans totally on an estimation of the consequences or results of an act to measure its goodness, a “nonconsequentialist” position assumes judgements of goodness from loyalty to certain principles or a person’s intent. Alternatively, a “social welfare” perspective relies on the belief that good consequences are the ones that add to the well-being of society.

Sergiovanni’s (1992) and Kidder’s (1994) proposed standards to guide actions reflect a spiritual and religious context to morals. Comparable to the values introduced by Jesus and taught in the Christian faith, Sergiovanni (1992) suggests morals should be guided by “tolerance, compassion, loyalty, forgiveness, peace, brotherhood, justice, and fairness” (p. 111) and Kiddler (1994) identifies eight universal ethics: “love, truthfulness, fairness, freedom, unity, tolerance, responsibility and respect for life” (p. 10). Since values have to do with modes of conduct, it is important that students understand and internalize them. By demonstrating a connection between morals, religion and spirituality educators could give students a standard of criterion for guiding their thoughts and actions.

Examining spirituality, religion and morals in education models

Different from an “economic liberal” approach to learning that focuses on ranking, competition and class selection (Manzer, 1994), a “student-centred” approach may find room for pedagogy that demonstrates the relationships between spirituality, religion and morals. An economic liberal educational model reflects the priorities of “productivity, efficiency and uniformity” rather than on “flexibility, diversity, rights and freedom” (Watkinson, 1999, p. 39), which is encouraged in a democratic student centred model. A democratic approach to education would enable students to feel more like apples connected to an apple tree, rather than apples attempting to adapt to the foreign system of an orange

tree. As a student centred model, it could lead to a community of students, teachers and administrators working as a team to nurture creative educational thinking, spirituality and a happy school life (Watkinson, 1999). However, the challenge of such a change is that some educational leaders may fear violation of the Charter of Rights, and thus preserve their comfort zones within a secular system that continues to sustain an orange tree.

Yob (1994) suggests that to remain true to mandates of public school learning, curriculum addressing spirituality or religion or morals cannot be filtered into the public schools without finding answers to some of the questions being proposed by educators working towards to conserving the current system. Because a clear meaning of spirituality has not been established, educators are compelled to equate it solely with religiosity and view it as esoteric. However, “peace, enlightenment, holistic truth-these are not solely the property of religions. While religious institutions may be committed to nurturing spirituality understood in these terms, public education institutions may elaborate these terms and pursue them as goals just as enthusiastically” (p. 7).

Creighton (1999) suggests that to promote spiritual growth and healthy morals, educational leaders must be willing to let go of certain outdated paradigms of leadership and misunderstandings of spirituality. Although spirituality is a part of human experience, “traditional views of spirituality have been shaped by the patriarchy to make the spiritual become separate, beyond natural and arranged in hierarchical relationships” (Ballou, 1995, p. 14). Spirituality embraces religious and mystical implications, which need to be challenged and demystified by educators (Creighton, 1999, p. 5) Until spirituality becomes part of one’s daily experiences, language that aims to describe it appears abstract (Cooper, 1997). Therefore, educators may find it challenging to intellectually connect spirituality with morality or to view it as separate from religion.

Ideological factors influencing legislation and policies in education

A number of major ideological factors have influenced the evolution of educational policies, which currently affect how many educators view the relationship between spirituality, religion and

morals. According to a liberal perspective, people are naturally good and can be perfected by reason alone, without any assistance from a God; however, according to a conservative view, people are flawed and capable of being good or evil; thus to discover the good, they need the wisdom of the ages to be found in religion and moral standards (Manzer, 1994). Because the notions of spirituality outlined by Cooper (1997), Creighton (1999) and Yob (1994) appear to be connected with religion and morals, then examining the history of educational policies and ideologies could assist in coming to an understanding of what educational leadership models have influenced the separation of religion, morals and spirituality.

In the early 1800s, schools commonly had a religious base and were run by individual denominations. In addition to reading, writing and arithmetic courses, “good morals were the backbone of the majority of schools” (Sheehan, 1988, p. 19), that offered a “good dose of the scriptures as well” (p. 19). Education, in that era, was composed of a patchwork of formal and informal teachings; children learned either at home, church, in private schools or through a job apprenticeship (Lennards, 1990). “The Legislature spoke in 1820 of the need for the improvement of the moral and religious habits of the rising generation” (Mackay, Innis, Forestell, Jeanneret, Waisberg, Whiteside, Monday 1969). By the mid 1800s, Canadian schools had been established as public institutions to mainly provide religious instruction (Manzer, 1994). Some Roman Catholic and Anglican conservatives fought to preserve denominational education in the schools, which was opposed by the political liberals. While the liberals advocated non-denominational Christian common schools, ruled by the state, the conservatives were committed to retaining church control of education. However, the role of schools soon shifted from an agency serving private purposes to a state-controlled bureaucratic organization where “diversity was replaced by uniformity” (Lennards, 1990, p. 400).

Ryerson’s School Act passed in 1846 recommended that boards of trustees decide the extent and manner of religious study in their own areas (Mackay et al., 1969). Although a school could now offer sectarian instruction, no child was to be coerced to attend. Additionally, the government was to keep out of religious matters in schools. After this act was passed, many educators and parents voiced their concerns about schools becoming “godless” and they suggested the Bible should be a compulsory

part of education.

In 1849, Cameron introduced a school bill, which prohibited from the schools all books containing “controversial theological dogmas or doctrines” (Mackay et al., 1969, p. 6). His bill was later defeated and replaced by the School Act of 1850, which appeared to encourage spirituality and help build morals within the school system. It stated:

in each school the teacher should exert his best endeavours, both by example and precept, to impress upon the minds of all children and youth committed to his care and instruction, the principals of piety, justice and a sacred regard to truth, love to their country, humanity and universal benevolence, sobriety, industry frugality, chastity, moderation and temperance and those other virtues which are ornament of society and on which a free constitution of government is founded (p.7).

Excluding religion from a curriculum could have made it challenging for educators to follow the School Act of 1850. However, this Act may have led to the development of Ontario’s School Act of 1855, that brought religion back into the system..

Ontario’s School Act of 1855 stated that each school day should commence and end with prayer and Bible reading, the Lord’s Prayer was to be part of the morning exercises and the Ten Commandments were to be taught to all students (Sweet, 1997). Students, however, could be excused from religious instruction, if their parents requested it (Sweet, 1997). Some of the ideology surrounding the Act of 1855 could have influenced the British North American Act (B.N.A.) passed 12 years later.

The B.N.A. Act, introduced in 1867, provided for the coexistence of Church and State in the education of children, where both agencies were seen as having a role to play in education (Mackay et al., 1969). Section 43 (6) of the Act gave control of education to the provincial legislatures. “The provisions of Section 93 clearly recognized Protestants and Roman Catholics, the two groups which included (at least nominally) nearly every person in Canada in 1867” (Giles & Proudfoot, 1994, p. 38). Out of certain court cases, the following definitions of these two groups arose: “a Protestant is anyone who denies the authority of the Pope in Rome; a Roman Catholic is a Christian who accepts the authority of the Pope in Rome” (p. 38). In Ontario, Catholic “schools acquired constitutional protection

... through section 93 of the British North American Act” (Manzer, 1994, p. 56), which gave them permission to teach Christianity. The Common Schools Acts of 1871 and the Public School Acts of 1890 terminated Christian practices in public schools by demanding that all schools under the provisions of the Act shall be non-sectarian (Giles & Proudfoot, 1994; Manzer, 1994, p. 57). These acts demonstrate why public school educators have been reluctant to acknowledge relationships between religion, spirituality and morals.

New ideologies leading to changes in school policies were associated with what was taking place historically, such as the Second World War. During the Second World War, there was a sense of “instilling a moral purpose in the young as the only way to ensure a future” (Sweet, 1997, p. 31). Thus, in 1944, a regulation was altered to enforce that religious instruction be part of the regular curriculum. “Classroom teachers were given the responsibility of teaching a Bible-based course for two half-hour periods a week” (Sweet, 1997, p. 32). This regulation suggests that policy makers in that era acknowledged a strong relationship between religion and morals.

The three-decade period from the mid-forties to the mid-seventies was the era during which the current Canadian educational system was being formulated (Sheehan, 1988). School administrators were developing the “hegemonic ideology of Canadian educational policy” (Manzer, 1994, p. 148) which swung from an “ethical liberal” perspective to an “economic liberal” view. Post-war educational policies and policy-making were controlled mainly by the “ideology of economic liberalism” which emphasizes the “equality of opportunity for individual economic achievement” (Manzer, 1994, p.161). Educational facilities became the main agencies for preparing a student to enter the job market, rather than for teaching morals or religion or spirituality. Schools were becoming organized like factories, and the educational process became comparable to commodity production. What happened in schools was ruled either by technological demands of society or by the economic requirements of the capitalist elite (Lennards, 1990). This “empty box view of education” (p. 428) suggested that schools had not been embracing a life of their own, but were acting as “passive transmitters” for external influences. To address this empty box view, the Ontario Minister of Education established an investigative group.

In 1966, the Ontario Minister of Education appointed a Committee on Religious Education in

Public Schools in Ontario to examine and evaluate the system in the province (Mackay, et al., 1969). By 1969, the committee had completed a report with some major observations and recommendations. Although committee members were advised to remain true to the principle that there was to be no denominational teaching of religion in the public school system of Ontario, they recognized a need for schools to instil knowledge about religion. Religion was viewed as playing a major role in developing values and attitudes obtained from one's heritage. "The scriptures are the world's great literary treasure. History, literature, art and music cannot be understood or appreciated without an adequate background of religious knowledge. Equally important are the ethical values inherited from religion (p. 27)." The committee's observations reflect a relationship between spirituality, morals and religion.

The Committee believed that it was possible to build a balanced program which would provide youth with sufficient knowledge of world religions (Mackay, et al., 1969). With such a program, students could be made aware that most people in society believe in a religious interpretation of life, which involves acknowledging the existence of God as the creator. Despite the "pluralistic character and conflicting attitudes of our society, no student should be denied the educational advantage of a knowledge of Biblical literature, which . . . is enshrined in noble poetry, adorned with wise maxims and crowned with such a scheme of lofty morality as might insure the general happiness of mankind (p. 73)."

Based in this insight, the committee recommended the inclusion of some passages from the Bible in literature courses. It also suggested that courses in religion count as history courses under the English and History speciality (Mackay, et al., 1969). Despite the committee's recommendations, however, the economic liberalism ideology of that era was preserved by educators; therefore, religion, spirituality and morals were viewed as secondary to the economic requirements of the capitalist elite.

Since the late 1900s, Canadian public schools have demonstrated a lack of a ruling by an ideology of ethical liberalism, which is a form of "person-regarding" education that promotes self development in a humanistic sense (Manzer, 1994). Thus, while merely mirroring the demands of a wider society, the educational system has been known to have spiritually and mentally burdened many students, leaving them feeling oppressed and morally confused (Lennards, 1990). Their value, as individuals has been rated according to whether or not they can develop an identity that will fit into a

capitalist market institution and make them employable. While being mainly ruled by an ideology of economic liberalism, students may be facing deprivation of the opportunity for self development in a humanistic sense, which is usually guided by a combination of religious, spiritual and moral principles (Lennards, 1990).

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which became a base for some major court challenges dealing with religious matters in the schools in the late 1900s, appears to have provided a crucial turning point for how religion in the schools is viewed. “It can override provincial powers to regulate the role of religion in schooling It provides first for freedom of conscience and religion, and second, that everyone is equal before and under the law . . . (p. 44). An Alberta pastor and an Ontario Jewish parent used the provisions of the Charter to find support for religious schooling of their own faith (Martin, 1996). Also, parents from Hindu, Christian Reformed, Muslim, Mennonite and Sikh religious backgrounds “collectively petitioned the Ontario courts in search of support for religious schools for their children (p. 44).” These legal challenges have created some unconventional alliances among very different religious groups who all appear to see the connection between religion and morals. Their concerns resulted in further interpretations of the Charter.

1/Although the charter does not prohibit education about religion in public non-sectarian schools, it prohibits religious indoctrination2/ A religious education curriculum has no place in public, secular, non-denominational school. 3/ Religious exercises for example (saying the Lord’s prayer, singing religious songs) violate the freedom of conscience and religion of non-Christian students and teachers 4/ The argument that religious education from the Christian perspective is used to teach morals and values is not sufficient in law to continue the practice 5/Unless there has been initial constitutional support for denominational education, a province has no obligation to support religious education from the public purse. In Ontario, only the Roman Catholic minority denomination may legally be publicly funded. (Martin, 1996, p. 11)

These sections of the charter demonstrate policy makers’ reluctance to acknowledge the relationship between religion, morals and spirituality, despite the fact that Section 2 of the Charter “guarantees to all

Canadians freedom of religion, belief, assembly and association” (Young & Levin, 1998, p. 107). Therefore, many educators have raised concerns about how the Charter has limited their “professional autonomy and judgement” (p. 108), made discipline too lax and given too many rights to minority groups, and thus have suffocated their spirituality.

In the future, the Charter will continue to be a major instrument of alteration in the area of religion in schools. “The charter is not actively anti-religion or . . . anti-ChristianIt guarantees generally freedom of religion” (Martin, 1996, p.11). However, within a multicultural society and the current constitutional framework, it is challenging for educators to acknowledge and teach anything about relationships between religion, spirituality and morals. As employees of a school district, governed by provincial regulations and curriculum requirements, teachers are not granted freedom to teach whatever content they please (Young & Levin, 1998). They are “required by law to teach the curriculum as established by the province or other legitimate authorities, and to obey the legitimate instruction given to them by administrators and school boards” (p. 184).

Integrating religion, spirituality and morals in education

Subscribers of Calgary’s Change Agency (2000) have been chatting on line about spirituality, religion and morals in the school system. After having attended a Schools and Spirituality Seminar, several subscribers introduced postings that acknowledged the value of awakening the spiritual essence of students and breathing life into them. Others wrote about the importance of breaking away from a dysfunctional educational vision and establishing a new one that recognizes the connection between spirituality, religion and morals. One subscriber, (Change Agency, 2000), wrote about how a Catholic high school religious study program established in the 70s and 80s had resulted in frustration, conflict and poor grades. Then in the 90s, when the program no longer assumed a Catholic faith base, students’ attitudes changed; marks improved dramatically and the students expressed appreciation for what they were being taught. This new program format was evaluated as being spiritual, rather than religious (Cameron, 2000), which demonstrates some of the benefits of bringing spirituality into the education system and shows the downfalls of teaching religion, without spirituality.

Alexander (1994) points out that a new interest in spiritual education is marking a turn in educational thought away from viewing education primarily as “an agent of economic instrumentalism and epistemology-as it was seen by educational secularists” (p. 3). Spirituality is “a quality of lived experience, rather than a mode of knowing. The experience involves self-transcendence . . . beyond the narrow confines of the ego; and is rooted in . . . a radical openness . . . that is the ground of hope, humility, and growth (p. 2).” Similarity to Alexander’s (1994) view on spiritual education, Yob (1994) states

spirituality cannot be defined merely as the antonym of materiality for spiritual education reconnects students with the world, the needs of its peoples, its ecological concerns, its social justice, its distribution of goods, its peace. It does this indirectly by reconnecting students with something other than their material selves: God. (p. 7)

Yob’s and Alexander’s viewpoints demonstrate there is a connection between religion, spirituality and morality which is also supported by Cully. Cully (cited in Yob, 1994) suggests that “the questioning restless heart in search of peace with God is . . . a universal experience There is no such thing as a person without a God representation, whether one accepts or rejects a belief in God” (p. 2). Buddhist, Rizzuto, Tillich and other spiritual leaders, who perceive transcendence in non-personal terms, still speak about a quest for inner peace and spirituality (Yob, 1994). Additionally, Coles’ (1990) research indicates that “children across cultures and ethnic/religious boundaries by their own revelation in conversations and drawings, are “soulful, spiritual beings . . . with their own meaning-making representations of God” (cited in Yob, 1994, p. 3). Coles (1990) findings portray “children as seekers, as young pilgrims” (p. 3). Yob (1994), however, argues that children need further journeying and learning to understand God because they have not, in essence, already arrived. Thus, they should be taught about various religions and how they can be the path towards waking up one’s spirituality.

Yob (1994) introduces a variety of terms applied to the description of something beyond one’s self. “The ultimate is conceived as ‘nothingness’ in Buddhist thought, as ‘psychic necessity’ in Rizzuto’s . . . ‘The Ground of Being . . . or ‘Ultimate Concern’ in Tillich’s John Hick uses the ‘Eternal One’ Cully is insistent on the terms ‘the Transcendent’ . . . the ‘God Within’ or the ‘near Presence’ (Yob,

1994, p. 3).” Within the public school classrooms, there may be students who can relate to one of these perspectives while on a personal quest for spirituality and inner peace. “A quest is more than a duty; it is energized by an inner driving force, a search for satisfaction . . . The quest or its repression will be expressed as acts of peace or violence” (Yob, 1994, p. 3), which is evident in some of the recent school tragedies..

Cooper (1997) takes a different stand on connecting morals, spirituality and religion Children do not have to search for God because the presence of the Divine is evident in all things. One should think of God as “being a verb rather than noun” (p. 69). Renaming God, ‘God-ing’ to suggests a process, rather than making reference to a noun. “Goding is a mutually interactive verb, one which entails an interdependency between two subjects, each being the object for the other” (p. 69). From this perspective, spirituality, morals and religion would be presented as the connecting verbs: “spiriting”, “moralling” and “religioning”, which could create a narrative integration of them.

Cooper (1997) claims people devote themselves to spiritual lives because they “yearn to connect with truth and meaning” (p. 70). Although he does not refer to people as being on a quest for spirituality, he talks about practices, such as meditation, prayer and mantras and acts of loving kindness as ways to alter one’s consciousness. He suggests that spiritual awareness gained from these practices is not

intellectual knowledge, but wisdom—a deep knowing—inexplicable, indescribable and exquisite beyond imagination . . . It is what sustains us when we are faced with doubts, nourishes us when the world seems bleak, and comforts us when we face the death of loved ones. (p. 71)

This perspective demonstrates the value of learning about the spiritual connection to religion and morals but also demonstrates why there is a resistance to teach about spirituality in the public school system. If spirituality and intellect are viewed as being separate, some educators would argue that teaching spirituality should not be part of the curriculum. However, choosing to introduce spiritual practises could touch the students’ hearts, nourish their spirits and educate their conscience. Such practices may also help educators and students to experience spirit in action, God in the Making and a

higher awareness of moralistic behaviour.

New approaches to educational leadership

As an educator, Thom (2001) claims his own “spiritual hunger” has motivated him to try to enlighten others about some of the connections between religion, spirituality and morals. “It should be possible for administrators of our schools to be spiritual leaders with a conscience, without apologizing . . . (Thom, 1993, p. 110). Spiritual leaders demonstrate sincere caring for an organization, and choose a synergistic, rather than an adversarial approach to leadership (Creighton, 1999). Thus, educators need “to rediscover and renew an old paradigm: one that has the necessary humanistic and spiritual components” (p. 6). Thom’s Educational Leadership with Conscience model suggests a leader must rise above an organizational culture that attempts to sway decisions through politics and power. He speculates that his model could be extended to further enrich a balance of both the scientific and spiritual dimensions in shaping leadership and acknowledge the relationship between religion, spirituality and morals. In his model,

the educational leader acts with conscience, performing deeds which are characterized by justice and fairness. Justice may be thought of as a universal view of what is right, and fairness as a subjective view of what should be. Justice affirms human worth and dignity and human rights; it means such things as caring, equality, and righteousness. Justice is what is right for our society (p.164).

Educators Bolender (1995) and Leung (1997) praise Thom’s model for its ability to demonstrate the relationship between morals, spirituality and religion. His model is very close to transformational leadership, which demonstrates high standards of ethical and moral conduct and considers the needs of others over their own (Leung, 1997). “Thom has added a new dimension to existing leadership models and theories. Defining right and wrong by theological standards takes leadership a step beyond the path prepared by Sergiovanni and others” (Bolender, 1995, p. 113). Bolender states that as an administrator in the public school system, she views Thom’s model as reflective of great leaders. “The light shed by Thom’s model of leadership may further inform the study

and practice of educators struggling amidst a maze of leadership styles and theories” (p. 113).

Like Thom, Noddings (1992) notes that schools cannot be all things to all people, but educational systems can encourage spiritual growth and the development of morals, by teaching students to care for themselves and others. She introduces the concept of an educator as the mother of a heterogeneous family, who views students as if they were her own children, in need of care and nurturing. She sets out a model of caring in an educational context. According to her perspective, caring is the base of all successful education and schooling can be revitalized in its light. Moral education revolves around care and comprises four major components of moral education: modelling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation. Modelling is viewed as vital in moral and spiritual education. In this framework, an educator is not attempting to directly teach students principles and ways of applying them to problems. Instead, educators are demonstrating care and ethics in their relationships with those around them. Noddings (1992) critiques the liberal economic model of education and proposes an alternative vision which encompasses centres of care for: the self, the inner circle, strangers and distant others, animals, plants and the earth, the human-made world and ideas.

Nodding’s (1992) and Thom’s (1993) models both suggest ways to incorporate spirituality and morals into the educational system. They indicate there is a strong need to re-examine current educational models and initiate some fresh approaches to leadership. They have taken on the task of challenging the cycle of a dysfunctional vision, by introducing leadership models that acknowledge some of the relationships between morals, religion and spirituality.

Concluding statements

In this paper, I introduced some relationships between morals, religion and spirituality, noted in literature about educational leadership. The paper began by discussing how structural rigidity has resulted in problems for educational leaders wanting to teach certain values. Then the text addressed how a dysfunctional orderliness conserved within the public school system has resulted in attempts to keep morals, religion and spirituality separate. After discussing some of the relationships between the three terms, the paper examined the evolution of various ideologies related to education and legislation,

such as the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The paper ended with an outline of two leadership models, which could bridge the gaps between spirituality, religion and morals, by proposing a fresh vision of educational leadership.

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