



VALUES AND ETHICS IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

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EXAMINING THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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This article investigates the spiritual dimension within educational leadership practices. We draw our working definition of spirituality from the literature (e.g., Dalia, 2007; Miller, 2006; Thompson, 2000) and argue that spirituality is a phenomenon which enables leaders to find deeper meaning in their work. Further, we support the argument that spirituality is a significant dimension of human existence that is often silenced in the public school system and support the notion that it is time to release the spiritual dimension of human existence out of the boxes in which it is often imprisoned (Shields, Starratt, Sayani, Edwards, Langlois, & Fraser, 2004). For our purposes, spirituality is characterized by a heightened awareness of one's self and the desire to establish a connection with a transcendent source of meaning. A focusing theme of spirituality shapes our review of the literature on ethical decision-making that exemplifies ethical and spiritual leadership. Spirituality provides the overall conceptual link among the different bodies of literature that we examined.

Establishing Linkages between Spirituality and the Literature on Leadership

This article is conceptual in nature. We conducted a content analysis of the literature on leadership, ethics, and religion and spirituality to identify the presence of certain words and concepts within chosen texts or sets of texts. Data were collected from books, professional journals, and relevant websites. We followed the eight steps for conducting a content analysis as suggested by Carley (1992): decided on the level of analysis, the number of concepts to code for, whether to code for existence or frequency of a concept, how we would distinguish among concepts, developed rules for coding the texts, what to do with irrelevant information, coded the texts, and analyzed the results. Our review and analysis of the literature focused on four predominant linkages between leadership, ethics and spirituality. These are: (1) the use of a multi ethical paradigm for the moral good

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of learning, (2) the human element in leadership practice, (3) organizational integrity and authenticity, and (4) spirituality as the foundation for an individual's ethical framework. The balance of this article is devoted to a discussion of each of these themes or linkages in turn.

The Multi Ethical Paradigm for the Moral Good of Learning

Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) argue for a multifaceted approach to resolving ethical dilemmas. Their multiple ethical paradigm approach incorporates the paradigms of justice, critique, care, and the profession. These authors contend that by applying the paradigm of professional ethics an individual in a professional setting may mitigate clashing ethical codes. They state, "if there is a moral imperative for the profession, it is to serve the 'best interests of the student' . . . consequently, this ideal must lie at the heart of any professional paradigm for educational leaders" (p. 25). The tenet of serving the "best interests of the student" may be the essential ethical obligation for educational leaders. Starratt (1996) concurs with this notion suggesting that leadership must be transformed from one that is focused on efficiency and technical problem-solving to one that pursues an organization's vision. Starratt (2007) warns that the traditional "functional" approach to leadership might exclude the obligation to "pursue *the good intrinsic to the work*, intrinsic to the *practice of the profession*" (p. 166). He further argues that although the moral good of the learner is important it is inevitably intrinsically related to the moral good of learning. Thus, a more "substantive" (Starratt, 1996) approach towards relieving ethical dilemmas would embrace spirituality as an additional ethical perspective. He argues that spirituality provides leaders the opportunity to model the ethic of care within the workplace for it provides individuals with the strength to prevail over difficult situations.

In practicing the ethic of care, spiritual leaders cultivate a community of trust and cooperative relationships within the workplace (Northouse, 2004). Caring for others proves to be an essential component within an effective ethical framework and within spiritual-based leadership. Gilligan (as cited in Northouse, 2004) concurs with this notion identifying the *ethic of caring* and personal relationships as the foundation for ethical behavior. Ethically responsible educational leaders focus on the human element - relationships, values and actions of individuals within the school community. The need to cater to the human element is evermore present in today's workforce.

A New Pedigree of Leadership: Spirituality and the Human Element

The emergence of faith-based principles in the workplace (Hillard, 2004) suggests a growing trend to mitigate moral and ethical dilemmas with decisions based on the spiritual domain. The shift from a capital-centered to a human-centered workplace has spawned a new pedigree of leadership. It is within the nexus of the ethic of care where the shift to a spiritual focus for leadership emerges (Fairholm, 1997). This focus on spirituality is one closely aligned with the need to find meaning within one's work. Fairholm suggests infusing spirituality within one's

leadership is a vital adaptation to the shifting dynamic within today's workforce. He states, "People are hungry for meaning in their lives. They feel they have lost something and they don't remember what it is they've lost... it has left a gaping hole in their lives" (p. 60). Fairholm believes individuals are integrating spirituality within their everyday work lives to fill the void. In contrast, Klenke (2006) argues that the purpose of spirituality is not to serve work. Instead, work is to serve spirituality. From a leadership perspective, spirituality enables administrators to provide the meaning and passion that individuals are eagerly searching for (Houston, 2002; Houston & Sokolow, 2006). In his study of "good-to-great" companies, Collins (2001) argues that great organizations have the uncanny ability of providing work that is significant for its individuals. He states "the idea here is not to stimulate passion but to discover what makes you passionate" (p. 96). Covey (2004) posits that our current workforce is undergoing a dynamic transformation as it shifts from an Industrial Age mindset to one focused on the Knowledge Worker. The Industrial Age's main asset was capital and focused on things. In contrast, our evolution to a Knowledge Worker society has shifted the focus to the human element, that is, the workers themselves. Covey believes, "Quality knowledge work is so valuable that unleashing its potential offers organizations an extraordinary opportunity for value creation" (p. 14).

Influence of spirituality. Discussing the influence of a leader's spirituality, Heifetz and Linsky (2002) state:

A sacred heart means you may feel tortured and betrayed, powerless and hopeless, and yet stay open . . . the power of a sacred heart helps mobilize others to do the same—to face challenges that demand courage and to endure the pains of change without deceiving themselves or running away. (p. 230)

Spirituality provides the vehicle by which educational leaders model the appropriate behavior to the individuals within the school community by setting an example for their colleagues through their approach to daily work tasks (Solomon & Hunter, 2002). The term spirituality encompasses several perspectives including: making sense of situations; significance of life; deriving purpose; beliefs, standards and ethics that one cherishes; increased awareness of a connection with self, others, spirit, and nature; an unfolding of life that calls for reflection and experience including a sense of who one "is" and how one "knows"; and experience, awareness and appreciation of a "transcendent dimension" to life beyond self (Martsolf & Mickley, 1998). Although the concept of "transcendence" is underplayed within the literature it represents an integral aspect used to define spiritual leadership. The ability to establish a connection with something beyond mere physical experiences provides leaders with the inner strength to deal with difficult situations (Miller, 2006; Miller, Dantley, Denith, Brady, Shapiro, Boncana, & Engel, 2007; Wheatly, 2002). Fairholm's contention that individuals utilize spirituality to find meaning in their work is of great consequence for leaders within the educational milieu.

Effective leadership entails a deliberate attempt to provide experiences that will allow them to evolve first as individuals and then as practitioners. Palmer (1998) attests to this theory, indicating that teachers participating in programs designed to allow them to explore the spiritual dimension have reported to be better grounded with their inner being and more likely to flourish. These teachers have accounted such spiritual explorations for improving their teaching ability and enhancing their rapport with their students.

Organizational Integrity and Authenticity: The Spiritual Dimension

Klenke (2003) contends that the roots of effective leadership may be grounded within the spiritual dimension. She argues that spirituality provides leaders the opportunity of aligning personal and organizational values. It provides an “integration of, rather than separation between, the ‘private life of spirit’ and the ‘public life of work’ . . .” (p. 58). Aligning values for educational leaders reinforces individuals’ needs to find meaning through purpose or contribution. Most importantly, it benefits the entire workplace by providing organizational integrity. Evans (1996) maintains that “Integrity is a fundamental consistency between one’s values, goals, and actions...at the simplest level it means standing for something, having a significant commitment and exemplifying this commitment in your behavior” (p.185). For the school leader, the first moral lesson that they teach is that they have valuable beliefs and are willing to take action that demonstrate integrity, self-honesty, and practice authenticity (Begley, 2006; Bhindi & Duignan, 1997; Evans, 1996; Hodgkinson, 1991). If leaders do not act from a place of integrity then their authenticity will be questioned (Evans, 1996). Authentic leaders are those who are trusted because they fulfill their obligations, meet their commitments, and are trustworthy (Evans, 1996; Houston & Sokolow, 2006; Leonard, 2005). The primary principle of moral leadership and courage for the educational leader is complemented by authenticity - acting in accord with one’s beliefs - or as the colloquial expression goes, “If you talk the talk, then you better walk the walk.” For example, Nucci (2001) explains that a school leader who believes in Kohlberg’s concept of a “just community” may create a structure for joint decision making and democratic participation that involves all stakeholders, demonstrating in action his/her belief in cooperative power sharing. Such a structure will communicate to the community a very strong message about the leader, but even more so it will communicate that the climate, culture and community are founded on such values. The communication of values is a difficult, yet important task - one that requires balance.

Establishing organizational integrity is essential to the concept of community building within the workplace. Spiritual leaders view the relationship between the leader and those being led as a reciprocal one in which both parties are guided by the need for self-development. As suggested by Sizer and Sizer (1999) in order to find the covenant of any organization all that’s required is to see how people

spend their time, the relationships they build and how they approach ideas. These authors further suggest that we “look for the contradictions between words and practice, with the fewer the better...try to estimate the frequency and the honesty of its deliberations...though it will always want to spruce up for visitors, its hour by hour functioning is what is important...judge the organization not on what it says but on how it keeps (p.18).” Spiritual leaders attend to their workers’ needs, continually encouraging them to become more autonomous (Northouse, 2004). In turn, this relationship harbors a feeling of spiritual wholeness amongst all stakeholders (Fairholm, 1997). Individual relationships seem to be enhanced when spirituality is shared throughout the work community. Ultimately, spiritual leaders understand that their effect on the organization is greater than themselves. Referring to the spiritual leader, Barton (2003) asserts, “Authority, like love, is useless until it is given away” (p. 7). Covey (2004) argues that effective leaders understand that making a sacrifice denotes “giving up something good for something better” (p. 316). Covey further elaborates by quoting Albert Schweitzer, “I know not what your destiny will be, but one thing I know: the only ones among you who will be truly happy are those who have sought and found how to serve” (p. 316).

Servant leadership. We support Greenleaf’s concept of the servant leader as essential in defining spirituality. Greenleaf (1988) argues that if a better society were to emerge, it would be one predicated upon the care for others. In *Spirituality for Leadership*, he articulated:

If a better society is to be built, one more just and more caring and providing opportunity for people to grow, the most effective and economical way, while supportive of the social order, is to raise the performance as servant of as many institutions as possible by new voluntary regenerative forces initiated within them by committed individuals, *servants*. Such servants may never predominate or even be numerous; but their influence may form a leaven that makes possible a reasonably civilized society. (p. 1)

Still, an important notion not explicitly stated within Greenleaf’s concept of servant leadership is that of the ‘authentic leader’. Bhindi and Duignan (1997) argue that a framework for effective leadership must be based on authenticity. If the concept of servant leadership is to be used as the foundation for spiritual-based leadership, it is vital for spirituality to stem from authentic relationships. Servant leadership engages individuals in meaningful relationships and attempts to make connections with something greater than the self. Greenleaf’s (1970) concept of servant leadership is at the core of the spiritual leader. He asserts that leadership emerges within an individual’s capacity to serve others. Thus leadership is achieved through authentically giving of oneself in the service of others (Sanders, 1994). Fairholm (1997) maintains servant leadership provides the transformational dynamic that is required for individuals within today’s organizations. This transformation entails shifting leaders’ values from the material to the spiritual. To be effective, leaders must change their heart, or spirit, and “put those they serve first and let everything take care of itself” (p. 26). Thus, the servant leader is

one driven by spirituality. Fairholm further asserts that “Spirituality stretches the leader’s mind toward vision, reality, courage, and ethics. The spirit leadership mind is touched by the unconscious. It lets us get in touch with external questions of the spirit” (p. 26).

Servant leadership suggests that individuals should treat others as *they* would like to be treated (Beckner, 2004). The tenets of servant leadership are aptly described within Covey’s “paradigm of interdependence”. Within this paradigm, Covey (1989) argues for the power of collaboration and cohesiveness among individuals within an organization. He states that organizations that practice empathic listening and rally individuals towards a common goal establish synergy. Northouse (2004) claims that interdependence suggests that true leadership emanates from being a servant. Servant leaders focus their attention to the needs of their workers, emphatically listening and providing them the guidance necessary to become free, more autonomous, and ultimately, more like servants themselves.

This notion of serving others before serving the self is also manifested in the Golden Rule found within the other major religions and faith traditions (i.e., Prophetic Christian, Catholic, Jewish, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Muslim traditions). For example, in keeping with the notion of serving others one can turn to the Buddhist tenet of respect for the sanctity of life. The Soka Gakkai Buddhists (SGI), an NGO that promotes peace, culture and education work in ways appropriate to local cultures and customs to promote human rights and sustainable development, raising awareness and moral responsibilities, and forging links at the grass-roots level to foster personal change, social contribution and a culture of peace. SGI has its roots in Soka Gakkai, an organization originally founded to promote educational reform in Japan in 1930. SGI sees education “as the key to a healthy society and is committed to promoting humanistic education aimed at fostering the unique potential of every human being and a deeper understanding of human life and the world we live in” (Soka Gakkai International, 2008).

Empathic listening is an essential quality to the servant leader and integral in establishing interdependence within the workplace (Northouse, 2004). Covey (1989) defines empathic listening as the process of listening with the intent to *understand*. Empathic listening allows leaders to get into an individual’s “frame of reference” (p. 240). Covey claims individuals not listening at the empathic level fail to reach an authentic understanding of others. Greenleaf (as cited in Beckner, 2004) contends that empathic listening builds strength in other people.

Spiritual meaning. Spiritual leadership may be credited with enhancing individuals’ perception and utilization of their inner strength. Individuals in the workplace benefit from applying personal spiritual meanings to construct and frame their approach to work (Solomon & Hunter, 2002). Greenleaf’s (1996) concept of *entheos* describes how leaders may adhere to spirituality to enhance their leadership and establish their own ethical convictions. *Entheos* refers to being driven by one’s spirit. It is the “power actuating the person who is inspired” (p. 82). Greenleaf explains:

Entheos is an imperative if the ethical obligation to develop *strength* is accepted... To accept this as a binding ethic when society at large does not accept it calls for sustained inner prompting - entheos. New ethics evolve not from idealistic pronouncements but because determined individuals practice them, in opposition to the prevailing sentiments of society if necessary, and demonstrate their validity. (p. 82)

The ability to find strength within one’s spirituality to construct new ethical convictions parallels Kohlberg’s post-conventional levels of moral judgment. Kohlberg (as cited in Beckner, 2004) asserts that individuals within this level practice the highest form of ethics and follow self-chosen principles indicating a higher degree of moral virtues.

The empowerment of teachers is a high priority for spiritually-oriented educational leaders (Barton, 2003). These leaders understand that their role is to promulgate collaboration among individuals within the school community. Lambert (2003) suggests the power of establishing this community lies in an organization’s ability to lead itself and to sustain this leadership capacity when key individuals have left. Thus, spiritual leaders place less emphasis on formal authority and choose to distribute power among those being led. According to Keyes, Hanley-Maxwell and Capper (1999), a school leader who creates a supportive environment for critique encourages autonomy and risk-taking while communicating trust that teachers can succeed. These authors indicate that leader behaviors are undergirded by a spirituality grounded in valuing personal struggle, recognizing the dignity of all people, blending the personal and the professional, believing that people are doing their best, listening and dreaming. However, using one’s personal spirituality as the foundation for modeling the appropriate actions within the workplace may seem daunting. One may question whether their own beliefs will be sufficient for others during difficult times. Sokolow (2002) and Tolle (1999) argue that the enlightened leader utilizes a set of universal principles, or spiritual truths available to all leaders. Leaders are able to acclimatize themselves to these principles by strengthening their “spiritual muscles” and relying on what Covey (2004) coined “spiritual intelligence” (p. 54). He insists human beings are endowed with four intelligences at birth including mental, social, emotional, and spiritual. Covey asserts that spiritual intelligence is essentially superior because of its guiding role in directing the other intelligences. According to Covey spiritual intelligence is “linked to humanity’s need for meaning, an issue very much at the forefront of people’s minds . . . spiritual Intelligence is what we use to develop our longing and capacity for meaning, vision, and value” (p. 54).

The Foundation of an Ethical Framework: Spirituality

Researchers assert that spiritual leaders provide the transformational power to influence change in the context of ethical principles (Dantley & Tillman, 2006). Dantley (2005) applies Cornel West’s notions of prophetic spirituality along with the tenets of principled, pragmatic and purposive

leadership to serve as the foundation for progressive transformation of educational leadership. According to Dantley (2005), the application of personal spirituality to community issues of social change and social justice may provide a direction for educational leadership. Aligned with Dantley's work, Klenke (2004) identifies spiritual leaders as having the "ability to transcend their own interests and needs and for the sake of the followers, which motivates them to pursue higher moral standards" (p. 58). Thus, spirituality provides an effective paradigm for basing ethical decisions. Fairholm (1997) contends that spirituality "moderates and contains the day-to-day life challenges that often cause us to question 'right or wrong' choices" and "serves as the basis for decision making and subliminally shapes the opinions that we see as viable" (p. 77). Thus, spirituality is essentially the foundation for an individual's ethical framework. Individuals with greater spiritual convictions may boast a deeper and more complex set of ethical paradigms attained from their relationship with the divine.

The spiritual domain manifests itself within the core of one's value system (Covey, 1989) and provides the framework by which one thinks and acts according to one's values (Fairholm, 1997). To revisit Greenleaf's work (1996), he suggests *entheos* is crucial to uncertainty during decision-making:

Entheos is seen as a basic spiritual essence. It is the sustaining force that holds one together under stress. It is the support to venturesome risk-taking action. It provides the prod of conscience that keeps one open to knowledge when the urge to be comfortable would close the door. It provides a linking concept by whatever religious beliefs one has are kept in contact with one's attitudes and actions in the world of practical affairs. It nurtures a powerful concept of the self. (p. 82)

Finding clarity during tumultuous times is possible with an identity emanating from the divine (Thompson, 2004). Spirituality provides the source for clearing one's mind of preconceived judgments and honing in on one's value system. Thompson proposes that spirituality allows leaders to move towards clarity and perceive what is truly important during trying ethical situations. In his study determining the relationship between knowing scripture and using ethical reasoning Nelson (2004) found that college seniors' Bible knowledge was positively correlated with Kohlberg's post-conventional levels of ethical reasoning. Moreover, Nelson discovered a negative correlation between Bible knowledge and Kohlberg's pre-conventional levels of reasoning. The study revealed that a student's knowledge of scripture was attributed to high levels of moral reasoning. Covey (2004) maintains the highest manifestation of spirituality is the development of a conscience. He defines conscience as one's moral sense or inner light and claims that it is a universal phenomenon, independent of a singular religion. Covey asserts that "the spiritual or moral nature of people is also independent of religion or of any particular religious approach . . . Yet all of the enduring major religious traditions of the world are unified when it comes to basic

underlying principles or values" (p. 77). Thus, it appears that the spiritual dimension provides the essential foundation for ethical, principle-based leadership.

It is evident that ethical decision-making is influenced by an individual's degree of spirituality (Fairholm, 1997; Miller, Dantley, et al., 2007; Nelson, 2004). However, the literature fails to differentiate between the religious and secular spiritual domains (e.g., Sanders, 1994). There appears to be a significant need to further identify and delineate the role each of these domains contributes as the foundation for ethical decision-making that resonates with ethical and spiritual leadership.

Religion and spirituality. Skepticism is sometimes expressed about the legitimacy of spirituality in the workplace, especially in public education (Fairholm, 1997). However, Thompson (2004) attests that spiritual-based leadership does not challenge the separation of church and state delineated in the United States Constitution's Establishment Clause. Klenke (2006) offers the following explanation:

Spirituality is often defined by what it is not. Spirituality . . . is not religion. Organized religion looks outward; depends on rites and scripture; and tends to be dogmatic, exclusive, and narrowly based on a formalized set of beliefs and practices. Spirituality, on the other hand, looks inward, tends to be inclusive and more universally applicable, and embraces diverse expressions of interconnectedness. (p. 59)

Research asserts that spirituality is the ability to lead from deeper levels of experience, meaning, and wisdom (Sokolow, 2002; Thompson, 2004). Fairholm (1997) concurs stating that "Spirituality does not apply to particular religions, although the values of some religions may be part of a person's spiritual focus. Said another way, spirituality is the song we all sing. Each religion has its own singer"(p. 29). Solomon and Hunter (2002) argue that spirituality is better understood as a meaning system. Fairholm (1997) argues that as individuals begin to differentiate religion from spirituality, the role of spirituality within individual and organizational life becomes clear. He concludes:

Our spirit is what makes us human and individual. It determines who we are at work. It is inseparable from self. We draw on our central values in how we deal with people every day. Our values dictate whether we set a good example, take care of people, or try to live the Golden Rule. Our spirituality helps us think and act according to our values. (p. 77)

Spirituality's role in aligning a leader's actions with their values is a distinctive characteristic not shared by religion. Religion guides by specific doctrine whereas spirituality is generic and affords the leader a dynamic quality capable of capitalizing on the diverse belief systems operating within an organization. Gardner (1999) identifies the possibility of an "existential intelligence" (p. 60) and differentiates it from

religiousness. Citing the profound experience of loving another person, Gardner argues “existential intelligence” may qualify as a provisionary addition to his original list of multiple intelligences. It is within this definition of existential intelligence where spiritual leaders may identify with the ethic of care (love for another) and the need to serve others.

Gardner’s reluctance to willingly incorporate existential intelligence within his index of multiple intelligences implies the ill-conceived notion that spirituality or existential intelligence does not mesh well with the secular world. His definition of existential intelligence as a profound loving experience for another person presents a limited understanding of spirituality. Spirituality is not, as Gardner contends, the ability to express profound love. Instead, it is the capacity to strike a personal and meaningful relationship with the divine (Bhindi & Duignan, 1997; Sokolow, 2002). It is the sustainability of this relationship that is integral to ethical leadership.

Renewal and spirituality. Ethical leadership entails a persistent renewal of one’s spirituality. Thompson (2004) argues that spiritual leadership calls for a continual “renewal of mindfulness” (p. 62). Renewal of mindfulness is imperative for leaders as it mitigates the probability for habitual practices evolving into common routines. The monotony of everyday decision-making may pose a threat to the reliability and validity of one’s principles and values. Renewing one’s spirituality provides leaders with the medium through which they may realign their personal values and redefine their passions. Covey (1989) stipulates that renewal also provides leaders the opportunity to reinforce their personal leadership. He states:

You increase your ability to live out of your imagination and conscience instead of only your memory, to deeply understand your innermost paradigms and values, to create within yourself a center of correct principles, to define your own unique mission in life, to rescript yourself to live your life in harmony with correct principles and to draw upon your personal sources of strength. (p. 304)

Covey criticizes contemporary beliefs claiming the relationship between self-esteem to matters of the mind, or attitudes. Instead, he posits that self-esteem and personal security are fostered by the persistent renewal of spirit. In other words, renewal is essential to an individual’s matter of emotion. He claims individuals are at peace with themselves when their lives are in harmony with their true principles and values. This harmony with one’s self builds integrity and harbors interdependent living.

Spiritual renewal manifests itself within a myriad of activities. Meditation, prayer, reading great works of literature, listening to music, and communicating with nature are a few examples of activities spiritual leaders may utilize in renewing their spirituality (Covey, 1989). Thompson (2004) describes the method of *self-talk* as an effective means of renewing one’s spiritual dimension. *Self-talk* entails “conversing with oneself in

positive terms about one’s performance” (p. 61). He contends this process allows individuals to realign their personal values and principles and redefine the meaning they derive from their work.

Renewing teachers’ spirits is a central task of the spiritual leader (Fairholm, 1997; Palmer, 1998, 1993). Educational leaders must provide teachers with opportunities to grow and learn within the school community. However, leaders must be aware that sources of spiritual renewal are highly individualistic (Thompson, 2004; Tolle, 1999; Woods, 2007). Leaders must be cautious inculcating spirituality in the workplace. Attention to the needs and private thoughts of the individuals must be the primary objective (Fairholm, 1997). Fairholm suggests that “any activity that challenges us to listen, share, and review our value system with others builds our spirits” (p. 84). Furthermore, he makes a distinction between the different varieties of spirituality that may be present within the workplace. He contends “in-spirit” (p. 84) activities are ones designed for group socialization. These activities provide workers the opportunity to engage in discussions pertaining to the meaning of life and work-related issues. Individuals’ spirituality is fostered through bonding and participating with their colleagues. Group brainstorming and staff meetings provide the venue for individuals to collaborate in planning and decision-making.

In contrast, “re-spiriting” (Fairholm, 1997, p. 84) activities provide opportunities for praxis and personal reflection. Praxis is used by educators to describe a recurring passage through a cyclical process of experiential learning such as the cycle described and popularized by Kolb (Smith, 2001). Research indicates that praxis is key in spirituality due to the inability of the finite mind (and its tool, language) to comprehend or express what is infinite (van Gelder, 2006). Quiet contemplation, reflection, and challenging study are appropriate activities for engaging individuals in spiritual-strengthening activities. Re-spiriting activities are vital to an organization’s success as they provide employees with an emotionally rewarding experience. Furthermore, re-spiriting establishes work as a spiritually meaningful practice.

Conclusions and Implications

In a narrow sense, spirituality concerns itself with matters of the spirit that help form an essential part of a school leader’s holistic health and well-being. By attending to other’s needs, these leaders may define the shared values and purposes necessary for revitalizing the school’s community. Based on the leadership literature we presented an argument that spirituality is a viable component that connects school leaders and their leadership practices. We contend that spiritual leadership enables leaders to find deeper meaning in their work by heightening self-awareness and the desire to establish a connection with a transcendent source of meaning. As supported in the literature leadership involves the complex cohesion of inspiration, encouragement, multiple paradigms of ethics, authenticity, morality, relationship building, reflective self-honesty, and the renewal

of spirituality (Begley, 2006; Fairholm, 1997; Sergiovanni, 2006; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Starrat, 2007; Thompson, 2000). It is within these dimensions that leadership provides organizational integrity and authentic leadership practices that can influence thinking and understanding of individual and collective values, not only in school settings but in the greater society.

We suggest that by incorporating the spiritual dimension in leadership practices school leaders are able to think more holistically, to act responsibly in judgments, to challenge others, to learn more clearly their own worldview and points of view, and to regard their own professional work as one that builds and enhances not only their own character and identity but those with whom they interact. In other words, school leaders can serve as the spiritual guide to their teachers, students and the larger learning communities in which they serve. Furthermore, adding the dimension of spirituality to their leadership can be helpful for leaders who search for life-sustaining contexts while simultaneously empowering themselves as agents of transformative change who align everyday practice with core values in ways that will make a significant difference in their professional and personal lives. In order to fulfill this mission, understanding and connecting with the spiritual dimension of school leadership can re-energize those who are committed to giving their full physical and moral energy to the profession. It may also serve as an impetus to increase student achievement, closing gaps, and taking the next step in engaging the entire learning community.

The literature supports the notion that spirituality is a “meaning system” (Solomon & Hunter, 2002, p. 38) that has a broad ranging impact on how leaders think and act in daily life routines. It is a sense of profound internal connection to things beyond and/or within one’s self. When school leaders have made this connection in all likelihood they will be able to motivate others. Solomon and Hunter further claim that “approaching work tasks and colleagues with humility and respect not only provides important models for how others should conduct themselves but also establishes a tone, or ethos” (p. 41), that tend to the moral imperative of schools. Other researchers (e.g. Houston, 2002) argue that school leadership authority comes not from the position but from the moral authority that leaders are entrusted to carry as they build a future through children. We concur with Houston’s theory that leaders get their work done, not through mandate and fiat, but by gathering people together and persuading them to do what is right. To carry this out requires a higher connection than the direct line to the state department of education or the president of the school board. The result is people feel more engaged and present not only in their work life but also in their personal life.

We recommend that school leaders begin thinking about ways to engage themselves, their faculty, students and larger communities by nurturing relationships in the form of “giving back” to their communities. Stokley (2002, ¶23) highlights some useful examples of spiritual school leadership experiences that leaders might consider: (a) inspiring a student to voluntarily assist those in need, such as the elderly or disabled, (b) comforting the student who recently has lost a close friend or relative, (c)

encouraging students to visit an infirm classmate at home or in the hospital, (d) attending wakes, memorials and funeral services of colleagues, parents and students, (e) giving heartfelt sendoffs to those who are leaving for new positions or retiring, (f) collecting and distributing food for those less privileged, (g) voluntarily working in food kitchens, and (h) accepting the differences of others based on sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, physical stature, social and economic status, and gender.

Finally, we propose that the spiritual dimension of ethical school leadership may be the antidote for improving work environments in schools. It is common knowledge that educational leaders face ongoing series of dilemmas and challenges and often find themselves in need of constructive strategies to ensure smooth functioning of the complex organizations they manage and lead. Spiritually-oriented educational leaders put a premium on establishing genuine connections with those who work with them including fellow school leaders, administrators, teachers, parents and the larger community who look to them to set the tone for the district. These connections further help create a safe and trusting environment where personal risk-taking is valued and where leaders find themselves surrounded by people who are invested in what they do. These are school leader who engage in ongoing reflection on the human condition and cultivate rich, deep and complex understandings of different subjects and make conceptual connections between them. Teachers who are encouraged to fuse spiritual connections are much more likely to pass such a spirit of inquiry to those who matter most – their students. In our final analysis, spiritual leadership can provide opportunities for students, teachers and administrators to reflect upon their lives, beliefs, traditions and experiences that have shaped their lives and its transcendent purpose. Education emphasizes not only “objective” learning of knowledge (Hunter, 2002, p. 39) but also the personal connection and relevance that knowledge has to a student’s life. According to Miller (2006) the transcendent purpose is:

a creative, self-guiding energy which we ought not attempt to suppress. No ideology, no social order devised by wealth- or power-seeking factions should be allowed to corrupt the delicate, miraculous unfolding of this creative energy. . . . Ultimately, a spiritual worldview is a *reverence for life*, an attitude of wonders and awe in the face of the transcendent Source of our being. (p. 154)

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