

Chapter 10

Holistic Education as the Conduit to Humanizing the Economy

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ABSTRACT

One of the main challenges of contemporary society is its incessant focus on developing individuality and personal objectives. A shift in paradigm will remove the dominant logic paradigm which impedes holistic development that is necessary for spiritual development to occur. A balanced society requires two perspectives, namely, the materialistic and the humanistic. Widespread materialism characterizes the dominant system, is associated with that which is rational, visible and tangible. In direct contrast, the humanistic perspective is uniquely concerned with values, beliefs and feelings. Humanism is only visible through the inner self and felt through the goodness of the heart; it is based on that which is associated with emotions, the spiritual and the inner conscience. Education is an instrument for developing society. To educate is an art and not simply the performance of a task, it is to liberate the learner for life and thereby giving the learner meaning for existence. The shift in paradigm also takes into account a holistic model of spiritual leadership. This chapter will present a critique on extant literature and emphasize the humanizing aspect of education development that contributes to a more humane workplace enriched with collective leadership, compassion, respect, enriched with emotional, spiritual and social awareness as well as wellbeing.

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INTRODUCTION

Management and economy sciences have concentrated for too long on profits, individualism and egotism. However, in the past few decades, this approach has gained new contours and a new dimension, what with the obsession for econometric measuring of reality economy using sophisticated economic models bereft of any social dimension. Nevertheless, all systems are dependent on the correlation of forces within its ecosystem. Therefore, to ignore the social dimension is to annihilate the results of the economic humanization endeavor, because an economy is an open system, interdependent and responsible for wellbeing of both society and humanity. Therefore, the economy has stopped thinking and the more technology advances the more its predisposition not to think grows (Rachline, 1994) despite the humanizing potential of the economy which could lead to a more just, humane and ethical world with more solidarity (Rocha, 2012). There is a strong complicity between spirituality in general and also specifically organizational spirituality. Consequently, this chapter reflects on three dimensions of Lips-Wiersma's (2002a, b) model, namely, (i) development and becoming self, (ii) unity with others and (iii) serving others. The objective of this chapter is to ascertain the perceptions of first year level undergraduate students regarding these values as a way to gauge their spiritual potential.

This chapter presents a critique on extant literature and emphasizes the humanizing aspect of education development that contributes to a more humane workplace enriched with collective leadership, compassion, respect, a workplace enriched with emotional, spiritual and social awareness including wellbeing. The chapter further reflects on the question whether contemporary education contributes to dehumanize the economy. For the purpose of this study, primary data was gathered with the distribution of a survey.

This study entails the gathering of data by distributing a self-designed questionnaire among first year Undergraduate University students in Minho, an area located in the north of Portugal. The purposive sampling method was chosen to facilitate a better understanding of the data obtained about whether these graduates will become qualified to lead organizations in the short and medium term. These findings were analyzed using SPSS and correlations were established. The analysis of the perceptions obtained may result in an informed capability to outline strategies, which are conducive to the awareness about values, which are spiritual in nature. The findings were analyzed using SPSS and correlations were established. The chapter includes a discussion of these findings. Conclusions, limitations of this study and recommendations for further study are set forth.

HOLISTIC EDUCATION AND SOLIDARITY PRINCIPLES IN THE PATH TO HUMANIZATION

The dehumanization of the economy is extinguishing values, norms and rules considered essential for the social coherence of contemporary society. Moreover, this loss distorts social structures as well as the very life project, of both individuals and society (Vásquez, 2006). This dehumanization impedes the realization of dreams and harmony between citizens. On the other hand, if the economy were to adopt a more humane stance this would entail privileging equity in both the distribution of wealth as well as in strategic investments, such as in education, learning and development. If the latter were more in line with an economy characterized by solidarity (Zamberlam & Silveira, 2012), this would transform society.

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