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Педагогика вдохновения: как зажечь огонь познания

Lighting fires: a pedagogy of inspiration

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Аннотация В статье рассматриваются проблемы педагогики как творческого процесса, который способствует не просто формированию знаний, а и развитию интеллектуального и духовного потенциала личности, что в свою очередь оказывает влияние на положительные изменения в обществе. Особое внимание уделяется гуманитарным аспектам образования во всех его сферах на примере деятельности выдающихся американских преподавателей и интеллектуалов, повлиявших на профессиональное формирование автора.

Ключевые слова педагогика вдохновения, развитие познавательных способностей, творческий интеллект, деятельностное обучение, образовательный диалог, педагогика сотрудничества, междисциплинарные связи, гуманитарное образование, творческая проектная деятельность

Summary The article is concerned with pedagogy as a creative process that apart from giving professional knowledge increases the intellectual and spiritual development of an individual. Creative education also facilitates positive transformations in society. Special emphasis is made on humanitarian education in all spheres illustrated by the professional activities of the outstanding American academics and intellectuals who played a decisive role in the author's professional creed.

Key words pedagogy of inspiration, cognitive development, imaginative intelligence, study by performance, dialogical education, pedagogy of mutual enrichment, intersubjective relations, arts education, creative project work

"Education is not about the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire."

When I first heard this quotation more than twenty years ago, it inspired me, for I believe education is a creative art infused with a muse of fire, not the business of filling empty minds with dollops of standardized information. The quote inspired me even more when later I saw, on a poster, that this insight comes from William Butler Yeats, an Anglo-Irish poet I particularly love. Cards, t-shirts, and thousands of internet entries display these wise words. In

writing this paper I needed to find where Yeats wrote about the pail and the fire. I knew it wasn't in a poem; it might be in one of his letters.

While searching, I discovered that the provost of Washington and Lee University, Robert Strong, had also been inspired by the quotation, and like me, he wanted to know the exact source from which the words had come.[1] Like me, he couldn't find it, though he did discover that it might be a rewording of a passage from Plutarch: "The mind is not a vessel to be filled but wood that needs igniting . ."[2] Has the quotation been misattributed?

Asking that question, of course, is part of what it means to light an intellectual fire. When questioning a source a person is not behaving like a passive pail, blandly accepting information. Though posters and internet entries give William Butler Yeats credit where credit may not be due, a mind alight can delight in questioning what the majority assumes, exploring the source and the nature of information. Teaching students to think in questions and to enjoy the pursuit of truth can bring light and warmth, not just to an individual or a classroom, but to the larger world.

"The Man who never Alters his Opinions is like Standing Water and breeds Reptiles of the Mind," William Blake wrote in his *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (c. 1791). In that illuminated book Blake speaks of how false surfaces must be burnt away (by the mind) so that what is essential, life-giving, and energizing can shine. Being educated involves grappling with the question of what is essential, and what should be discarded. Unfortunately wars can be fought when people disagree about such fundamentals, but inspired education can, as the American poet Robert Frost observed, give a person "the ability to listen to

[1] Robert Strong. "Advice on Lighting Fires," 9/13/12, provost at Washington and Lee University, accessed at:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/robert-strong/advice-on-lighting-fires

[2] Strong does not give the Plutarch source; it comes from *On Listening to Lectures* Plutarch's *Moralia* 48C (Variously called *De auditione Philosophorum* or *De Auditu* or *De Recta Audiendi Ratione*).

almost anything without losing your temper or your self confidence."[3] Inspired education can engender both strength and flexibility, involving the heart, the mind, and the imagination.[4]

Parker J. Palmer, a sociologist in Madison, Wisconsin, writes and lectures to inspire the hearts, minds, and imaginations of teachers – as well as students. His bestselling book, *Courage to Teach*, addresses the difficulties and joys of teaching from the heart, with integrity, imagination, and love. He challenges stultifying systems that care "more about weights and measures than meaning"[5]; the contents of a passive pail can be measured easily, but the beauty of an intellectual fire is hard to standardize. At the age of 75 Palmer directs The Center for Courage and Renewal, offering Courage to Teach retreats throughout America that use poetry and storytelling to ignite what he calls "the heart of a teacher." In these workshops, educators listen imaginatively to one another, considering how to draw upon their inner lives and deepest convictions, to create more trusting relationships in their schools and communities, and with students and colleagues. Fostering trust requires courage, as does making a classroom a creative space in which the exploration of meaning is more important than standardized test results. With Palmer I agree that the exploration of meaning involves learning to see through a different lens, to imagine (if only momentarily) a perspective that is not your own.

In every discipline the fascinating difficulty of seeing in different ways can be cultivated. Good scientists continually question basic assumptions, and their own theories. Historians grapple with the way history is written and perceived; artists argue about and (sometimes) respect varying standards of taste;

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[3] Robert Frost(1874-1963), *American poet, Reader's Digest, Apr 60.*

[4] Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of educators write about educating "the whole student," or "the whole child."

[5] Parker J Palmer (1998) *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life* (San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons), p.xiii

philosophers must take into account many assumptions about the nature of knowledge, truth, and being; and the study of literature invites readers to get behind of the eyes of a variety of characters, entering their world imaginatively, and (momentarily) accepting their values -- as a good actor might do.

Too often literature is taught through a series of lectures; the professor holds forth, filling the minds of passive students with information and (hopefully) some insights. Great universities offer thousands of lectures a week, but that, of course, is not the only approach to teaching. I was fortunate to be able to study literature in a small department at Northwestern University (near Chicago) in which literature is studied not only through critical theory and close textual reading, but also through the medium of performance. My great professor there, Wallace Bacon required students to use emotional, imaginative, and analytical intelligence when exploring great books. In his students, Wallace Bacon ignited creative, as well as analytical, fires.

In his year-long course, 'The Interpretation of Shakespeare', we read, performed from, and analyzed every single play William Shakespeare wrote. Each assignment involved writing a paraphrase; we "translated" Shakespeare's great language into modern speech, while noting the etymology and/or originality of key words and phrases. This accompanied a short essay about the scene we'd chosen which informed the five minute performance we'd present to the class. In that performance one student gave voice to many characters. We did not act on a stage; at a lectern we recited (or read aloud), giving life to the words we'd studied, understanding them more fully as we imagined (and even felt) Juliet's love, Lady Macbeth's insistence, Othello's crazy jealousy, Cleopatra's passion and fury. Shakespeare's genius became more palpable when giving voice to his words, and differences in creative interpretation sparked lively debates.

Great books, like human beings, are filled with life and ambiguity; they do not have one "correct" meaning, one standard interpretation, one scale of values.

Instead of lecturing, Professor Bacon often opened a class with a question to which there was no one correct answer. "What's Hamlet's problem?" he wondered, inspiring me to think of Hamlet as a real person, a young man who'd spent his entire adult life at the university, as unused to military action or court intrigue as you or I might be. Professor Bacon listened respectfully to each one of us, and required that we do so with one another. Though he never spoke to us about epistemology or educational theory, we learned from him that active listening is at the heart of learning. Listening carefully can spark good questions, enlightening both students and teachers.

I was doubly fortunate to teach for six years in a college where active listening is at the heart of its pedagogy. At Shimer College (now in Chicago) no one can be a passive pail. There are no lectures, and no standardized tests. There are never more than twelve in a class; students and teachers sit together at a round table, exploring the great books of the (mostly western) world.

At Shimer, the professor is a facilitator, a guide on the side, not a sage on the stage - encouraging each student to contribute to the intellectual light being kindled in every class. Each student is expected to question and comment upon the text, to respond to one other's insights, actively taking part in every discussion. Very rarely do students come to class not having read their Plato or Einstein, their Homer or Dostoyevsky, for when one of their peers asks what they think about Plato's allegory or Dostoyevsky's Russian Monk they look very stupid indeed if they mumble: "I don't know," or "I haven't done my reading." Students know their insights matter; they have something to offer to their peers, and to the life of the text being discussed. Some students are more exuberant than others, some would rather talk than listen; others may be a bit shy. The professor/facilitator must make sure that each student has a chance to shine, that each can feel confident, each can have the courage to ask what they think might be a stupid question. What are feared to be stupid questions are often the most provocative ones.

One of the great joys of teaching at Shimer (or anywhere) is the process of learning with and from students. The burning fires of shared thought can enlighten everyone in the room. My recent book about William Blake's prophetic poetry contains footnotes, not only from distinguished academics, but also from students with whom I explored the text – both creatively and critically. The honest questions and creative work of enthusiastic students can be as valuable as a well-written scholarly article.

Because of my background in literature and performance when I teach any subject (literature, art history, religion) I ask that my students approach each text creatively as well as critically. When students adapt stories from the religions of the world for performance, make collages concerning an abstract idea like 'coinherence', compose music, create dances or costumes and jewelry, their projects are not ends in themselves; they are a means by which a student can enter into the world of a text, enhancing the confidence and care with which they make critical observations.

Imagination and analysis complement one another. Both halves of the brain are needed if the fires of thought are to burn brightly. It's long been known that (among students of all ages) practicing visual arts and drama enhances reading skills, and practicing music enhances analytical and mathematical ability.[6] More recent studies by neuroscientists show that imaginative (and particularly, artistic) experiences enhance cognitive development. Because our brains prioritize those things which inspire us, learning through the arts strengthens long term memory.[7] Information without inspiration is unmemorable.

Unimaginative approaches to teaching (focusing upon achieving standardized results) are counterproductive, repelling students and atrophying minds, as indicated by the ever-increasing dropout rate and plummeting test scores across America. Since 2001 programs for arts in American education have been dying

[6] See President's Committee on Arts and Humanities (PCAH) *Reinvesting in Arts Education: Winning America's Future Through Creative Schools (*2014), p. 2

[7] See Rudacliffe, D. (2010, September 1). "This is your brain on art." *Urbanite: Baltimore Magazine.* Retrieved from http://www.urbanitebaltimore.com/baltimore/this-is-your-brain-on-art/Content?oid=1296770

the death of a thousand cuts, and since 2001 the high school dropout rate has increased to 25 – 30% nationwide. Over 2 million young people attend impoverished schools in which the dropout rate is at least 50%.[8] Yet when students in the poorest schools are given access to arts education (and imaginative approaches to learning) dozens of studies show that test scores rise and dropout rates decrease – dramatically.[9] According to a study conducted in 2009, when low-income students (many from problematic and deprived family situations) have access to arts education and participate in creative learning they do as well as average students from the highest-income families and school districts.[10] A student's access to culture, creativity, and inspired education, can be as important to academic success as his or her socio-economic background.

Prosperous Americans want creative education for their children. Well-funded and high performing school districts have classes in dance, music, studio art, and drama – with designated teachers for each subject; some schools invite professional painters, photographers, or performers to be artists-in-residence for a week, a month, or a term. Many impoverished schools cannot do that, but most teachers in every school can be encouraged to teach with creativity, to develop and use their own artistic gifts or interests. You need not be a professional musician or painter to fill a lesson with songs and visual art. The President's Council on Arts and Humanities in America suggests that teacher training programs include input and guidance from artists; all teachers can be encouraged to be as inspiring as they are informative.

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[8] PCAH, p. 28, citing Balfanz, R., Bridgeland, J.M., Moore, L.A., & Fox, J. H. (2010). Building a grad nation: Progress and challenge in ending the high school dropout epidemic. Washington, DC: America's Promise Alliance.

[9] Seven correlative studies that show the pattern of linkage between high levels of arts participation and higher grades and test scores in math and reading. (PCAH, p.16 citing Fiske, E.B. (Ed.), (1999), Champions of change: the impact of the arts on learning. Washington, DC: The Arts Education Partnership and the President's Committee on Arts and Humanities. Retrieved from http://www.aep-arts.org/files/publications/ChampsReport.pdf) For a description of additional case studies in Chicago, Oklahoma, Texas, and Alabama see PCAH, pp. 20-22.

[10] PCAH, p. 16 – citing Catterall, J.S. (2009). "Doing well and doing good by doing art: The effects of education in the visual and performing arts on the achievements and values of young adults" retrieved from http://tiny.cc/Oprbg

Artistically inspired training programs tend to create inspired professionals – in all walks of life. Business schools are starting to include creative subjects in their curricula (such as visual design or acting skills), for good business people (especially entrepreneurs) must have imaginative intelligence. "Look at the inventors of the iPhone and the developers of Google," Arne Duncan, the U.S. Secretary of Education writes, "they are innovative as well as intelligent. Creative experiences are part of the daily work life of engineers, business managers, and hundreds of other professionals . . . "[11]

Creative experiences enhance more than academic performance or success in business: they enhance the capacity for empathy. Students and teachers can be in empathic *intersubjective* relationships with their work, increasing their capacity for social tolerance, and their self-esteem.[12] When a teacher is in what the philosopher Martin Buber would call an I-Thou relation with his or her subject, a classroom can be like an enchanted place.

Martin Buber suggests that human existence is relational (or dialogical).[13] He writes about different kinds of relationships: the I-it, and I-Thou. If you are in an I-It relationship you see other people (and students) as objects, like passive pails, easily measured, conforming to standards, useful and controllable. But in an I-Thou relationship you see the other as a luminous and independent presence, worthy of your attention and respect. Social or cultural differences are neither disagreeable nor threatening to you; they are a source of wonder. In an I-Thou relationship you can see the divine in the human.

Professor Bacon stressed the importance of a professor being in an I-Thou relationship, not primarily with students, but with the subject, with the text at hand. "Literature has presence," Wallace Bacon writes, and readers can seek to be in "full communion with a work of art as John Donne sought to be with God

[11] PCAH, p.2.
[12] For more about creative teaching, empathy, and social tolerance see PCAH, p. 16.
[13] His book, *Ich und Du*, was published in 1923, and translated into English in 1937.

in prayer."[14] Bacon often suggested "that there is a love relationship between the reader and the text ."[15] When a teacher is filled with love for his her or her subject – be that Shakespeare, linguistics, geology, neuroscience, economics, or botany – that subject becomes interesting to most students.

Inspired teaching, filled with the fiery rigor of intellectual love, can turn the bleakest environment into a place of transformation: both for individuals and societies beyond the classroom. "Education," said Nelson Mandela, "is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."[16] He knew how to hone and use that weapon when he was imprisoned for twenty seven years for his political activism. Though sentenced to life imprisonment on Robben Island (just off the coast of Cape Town) he turned the lime quarry in which he and others were forced to work into a university. Among his supporters hellacious Robben Island came to be known as 'the university.'

While travelling by train from Wisconsin to Chicago ten years ago I had the amazing luck to sit next to Eddie Daniels, a graduate of Mandela's university. When Eddie Daniels was sent to Robben Island for political subversion in 1964 (at the age of 36) he had less than a high school education. Eddie Daniels' "university" education in the lime quarry began with "Invictus," the English poem Mandela recited with great regularity. It ends with these words:

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll.
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.

[14] Wallace Bacon, 1979. *The Art of Interpretation.* NY: Holt, Rhinehart, and Winston, p. 36
[15] Wallace Bacon, 1974. *Oral Interpretation and the Teaching of Literature in Secondary Schools.* Urbana, IL: ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills, p. 52.
[16] from a speech delivered by Mandela at the launch of Mindset Network on July 16, 2003 at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.

As Eddie recited that poem on the Amtrak train, nearly every person in the car strained to listen to what he had to say. Eddie spoke of how he learned poetry, philosophy, economics, and history from the 'professors' (fellow prisoners) in the lime quarry. Some prisoners were allowed to take correspondence courses, but they all had little time for study. So Mr. Mandela inspired each to teach what he was learning: every prisoner was a professor; every prisoner was a student. In groups of five or six they'd break rocks and hear talks prepared by their peers. Like students at Shimer College they discussed the subjects at hand, and questioned one another. They had to think in questions; there was no other option.[17]

When Eddie Daniels left Robben Island he'd completed two bachelor's degrees: one in sociology and economics, and another in business and industrial psychology. Prisoners studied a wide range of subjects, discussing many great books, and when Nelson Mandela was asked which book was most important to him during his sojourn at "the University" he replied immediately: "Shakespeare." "All the truth of life is in Shakespeare," Eddie told me. While breaking rocks, he and his fellow prisoners sometimes recited speeches from Shakespeare's plays.

They staged plays, too, without sets or costumes, just the words of the text. When Eddie told me about their production of *Antigone* (by Sophocles) I assumed that Nelson Mandela had been cast as the heroine, who is sentenced to death because she buries her brother in defiance of her Uncle Creon's unjust decree that he be given no funeral because of the civil war he'd incited (in Antigone's world, her brother's soul would have no rest without a proper burial). But Mandela played King Creon, the inflexible tyrant. "He played it well," Eddie Daniels recalled.

"Is that why he could negotiate so well?" I wondered. "Is that how he knew how to approach DeKlerk? He'd been that character!"

[17] For more about the 'University' see Nelson Mandela, 1995, *Long Walk to Freedom,* (London: Abacus) vol. 2, pp.175-92, 199-202. Also see Eddie Daniels, 2002, *There and Back,* 156-160.

"You might be right about that," Eddie Daniels said.

In playing Creon, Nelson Mandela had to take on the worldview of an oppressor. To play that part with integrity Mandela would know that the character craves security; tyrannical Creon thinks he's doing what is right and good. South Africa's prime minister DeKlerk (seeking, in his way, what was right and good) commented upon how sympathetic and understanding Mandela seemed to be when conducting negotiations. Did getting behind the eyes of Creon's character promote that understanding? Did it help create a sense for the necessity of forgiveness, which is integral to the healing of any ruptured relationship or society?

Creativity can enlighten, not just the mind, but human hearts and souls. Inspired teaching can burn away old assumptions, kindling the ability to regard problems, texts, and people from a variety of perspectives - which can heal personal and political wounds. People from different cultures and from all walks of life can listen respectfully to one another, and learn from one another. Inspired teaching is at the heart of the pursuit of wisdom, and without wisdom, life on this earth will not flourish.

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