An Examination of a Holistic, Spiritual Model for School Leadership

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Abstract

This paper proposes a conceptual model of school leadership focused on the importance of school decisions that combat alienation and promote personal meaning through holistic, spiritual connections. The model supports a framework for the critical examination of school organization, policy, and curriculum based on fundamental human connections to the self, others, the environment, and an ultimate reality. Guiding questions for school leadership based on this model are provided with the goal of creating healthy schools for students and community.

The School-Culture Context

According to James B. Macdonald (1975/2000), it is important that we understand schools as microcosms of the macrocosm—or smaller representations of the larger culture. Nearly every good and every evil found in the society at large can be found proportionately in our schools. Macdonald states it this way:

It is clear to me now that when we speak of education we speak in the context of a microscopic paradigm of a macroscopic human condition, a paradigm that holds all of the complexities in microcosm of the larger condition. (p. 4).

There are numerous reports of the social evils of our times and their appearance at school. Surely a view of the nightly news or a cursory reading of any newspaper or weekly news magazine will provide enough information to validate this argument without a mention of the most tragic of events. An article from the Hartford Courant headlined, “The Kids Are Hurting,” began with these opening lines:
Gripped by depression and anxiety, adolescents are swamping psychiatric wards and therapists’ offices across the country. This stressed-out generation of American youth is caught in a double-bind: intensifying pressure to meet an ever higher standard of success, and waning support and comfort within their families. (15 December 2002, p. 1)

It is not unusual to find depression and anxiety disorders among five year olds, eating disorders among eleven year olds, and propensity towards group harassment of peers of both sexes. Certainly, school dropout rates provide support that students are not connecting with the education provided by their schools (Kauffman, Alt, & Chapman, 2001; Young, 2002). The expressed alienation resulting in physical and psychological disorders, along with the stresses of everyday living and school dropout rates, is symptomatic of broken disengagements with supporting communities at school, in the home, and in the world at large.

Yet, our national educational agenda continues to center upon discussions of production, consumption, competition, outcomes, efficiency, technology, wealth, and standards as important tenets of success. Schools are recognized and rewarded by how well they support the national agenda. And, this reward system is becoming even more pronounced with No Child Left Behind that at least in part promotes a reductionistic view of education that sounds success-promoting but is, in reality, alienating to students and other school stakeholders. There is little discussion of community building, democratic processes, personal meaning, student-selected interests, peace-making, or social justice in our vitally important curriculum.

Adding support to this supposition are Jonathan Kozol and Neil Postman. Kozol in Savage inequalities: Children in America’s schools (1991), Rachel and Her Children: Homeless Families in America (1988), and Amazing Grace: The Lives of Children and the Conscience of a Nation (1995) explores the lives of children in low-income homes, communities, or schools and
exposes the alienating effects of poverty. Neil Postman (1996) in *The End of Education* outlines a type of alienation that he sees in education thus:

> [A]t its best, schooling can be about *how to make a life* [author emphasis], which is quite different from *how to make a living* [author emphasis]. Such an enterprise is not easy to pursue, since our politicians rarely speak of it, our technology is indifferent to it, and our commerce despises it. Nonetheless, it is the weightiest and most important thing to write about. (p.x)

In his examination of the purposes of education, Postman outlines an argument for the importance of definitions, questions, and metaphors to meaningful, life-related learning. Postman offers this context,

> Definitions, questions, metaphors—these are three of the most potent elements with which human language constructs a worldview. And in urging, as I do, that the study of these elements be given the highest priority in school, I am suggesting that world making through language is a narrative of power, durability, and inspiration. It is the story of how we make the world known to ourselves, and how we make ourselves known to the world. (p.175)

**Metaphors, Language, and Meaning-making**

Education theorists and school administration scholars have certainly taken their place in this conversation of language and meaning-making. Lynn Beck and Joseph Murphy (1993) defined historically by decade metaphors of school leadership through an analysis of emerging themes resulting from an examination of literature on the principalship beginning with the 1920s. Robert Starratt (2003) in *Centering Educational Administration: Cultivating Meaning, Community, Responsibility* names the center of the concentric circles of his figure defining the
dimensions of school life myth with outer layers of assumptions and beliefs, goals and purposes, policies, programs, organization, and operations (pp. 16-19). Starratt defines myth and its importance for school leadership thus:

At the core…, often flowing into the unarticulated beliefs and assumptions, are the myths and meanings by which people make sense out of their lives….These myths are stories whose symbolism enable us to define value, judge human striving, and place ourselves in an identifiable order of things….It includes the myth of heroism, human destiny, and the sacred nature of all life; myths about society’s relationships to nature, about values underlying the nation’s identity, about those values considered to comprise the essence of human. (pp.18-19)

Starratt believes myth to define the “foundation for their vision of what the school can and should become: the greenhouse for cultivating the educated person” (p. 19).

Primarily out of the social and political perspectives of Henry Giroux and Paulo Freire, alienation has entered education discourse as a discussion of oppression. Giroux (1981) postulates that the traditional or technocratic model of curriculum is suspect because of the kinds of questions it ignores—such as those addressing ethical and the political functions (p.101). Giroux describes the curriculum of the 1980s as one that appears to place high priority on control, where the “subjective dimension of knowing is lost…[and] the purpose of knowledge becomes one of accumulation and categorization” (p. 101). Giroux calls for a new curriculum theory that will build on those questions which accept that “power, knowledge, ideology and schooling are linked in ever changing patterns of complexity” (p. 104).

Giroux (1983), in Theory and Resistance in Education: A Pedagogy for the Opposition, proposes that education might be less alienating and more empowering if the “responses of
working-class people, minorities of color, and women” (p. 238) were enlisted in shaping school policies and experiences. That these persons become the subjects of policy-making rather than the objects is of fundamental concern to Giroux, who has continued to champion the involvement of all persons in making policy.

Giroux (1987) looked at language and empowerment in *Literacy, Voice, and the Pedagogy of Political Empowerment*. Linking his proposals with the scholarship of Antonio Gramsci, Giroux writes that the context of current literacy might “have less to do with the task of teaching people how to read and write than with producing and legitimating oppressive and exploitative social relations” (p. 1). Giroux calls for a critical assessment of what we do in schools as well as of the language that dominates us. He also suggests that we find ways of empowering those who in social and school structures have no power. He wrote,

> Equally important is the need for schools to cultivate a spirit of critique and a respect for human dignity that will be capable of linking personal and social issues around the pedagogical project of helping students to become active citizens. (p. 143)

Giroux continually writes about the disenfranchised who are alienated by a culture focused on production rather than true democracy.

**Transformation for Meaningful Connections**

The problem of alienation, or disconnection, is prevalent in the literature as a discussion point for social and educational dysfunction. Rather than attempting to modify or reconceptualize education as it currently exists, institutional education needs a transformation in structure, purpose, and curriculum. Education leaders who can define transformation of education as their moral duty and who are grounded in a moral vision of schooling can call to issue those aspects of schooling which are not catalysts for holistic education. The mythic canon
outlined here is possibly powerful enough to provide a framework for educational discourse that can transform our current dialogue into one of meaning. It proposes a framework for promoting new connections for wholeness through the relationship of the spiritual and political. The school leader’s true work then is to redefine the educational discourse as one of commitment to personal meaning through essential spiritual connections and through political/moral action based on these connections. Myth reveals the interconnectedness of the spiritual and political/moral dimensions of existence and enables us to engage in a dialogue on education that is about the politics of spirituality and implications for holistic living.

The Language of Myth as Metaphor for Ultimate Concern

The language of myth is one that can carry the weight of this discussion and at the same time provide a lexicon for public discourse. Myth provides a language of depth that can work as metaphor and at the same time call up the most sacred images. This language is profound, reverent and powerful enough to aid in discourse about personal meaning. Myth is the study of the meaning of life—of how one should live in the world: as a functioning individual who must be psychologically whole, as a social being who must make a contribution to community and to the larger society, as a person in awe of the divine and responsible for the natural world in which we all must live. At the deepest level we as human beings generally accept, both collectively and individually, that to live productive lives we must live in positive connection with the essential facets of being. Equally, we know that we do not and indeed cannot, function alone in making our way in the world, independent of essential relationships.

As delineated in this paper myth is a metaphor for ultimate concern, a term borrowed from Paul Tillich (1952, 1957). A mythic canon for school leaders, then, refers to a standard for judgment of the health of a school and its leadership in terms of what “could” and “should” be in
existence, those values, ideas, and practices of ultimate concern for schools and leadership. It is by this standard that the complex issues of school are judged. Myth serves as a foundation for discourse on fighting alienation and empowering persons both personally and politically—for actively empowering students and the school community to find personal meaning and to promote social justice. The lexicon chosen for such a discussion has to be powerful enough to deal with the political, existential, and psychoanalytical aspects of this issue.

Mythic Canon and the Spiritual-Political Model

The word *spiritual* is used here to refer to our root connections to the essential aspects of living as a human being, i.e., our union with an ultimate, with the inner self, with other persons in the larger society, and with the natural world. Our lives are not whole in fundamental ways if we do not recognize each of these associations as essential to our understanding of being human. These relationships are spiritual, then, in that they cannot be ignored or severed without dire consequences—the spiritual death of the person. Spiritual connections, then, constitute the “breath” of life in that they represent the cohesiveness and foundation of the essence of life itself. Taken together, these essential relationships constitute what is here referred to as one’s *spirituality*.

In this delineation the spiritual aspect of myth works behind the myth—invisible to those who do not know to look for it—and provides a framework that espouses the essential wholeness of being human as rooted in spirituality. The political aspect of myth works in front of myth—as actions fully visible to all—and represents the way we live among people as participants in community and as citizens of the world. The political aspect of life is a demonstration, an action, based on wisdom as to the most moral way to live one’s life among others in community and in recognition of one’s spirituality. The word *political* here denotes a participation in citizenship
and community much broader and more comprehensive than that afforded by governmental politics alone. It is, rather, a reference to the totality of the way people choose to live their lives with and among other people and with themselves. It is a reference to the way we make significant decisions about living as citizens of the world and a reference to the quality of life that ensues from such decisions. (A discussion of myth and metaphor follows in a separate section.)

The foundation for the political aspect of living is spiritual. In other words, the ethical and moral aspects of life, the choosing of actions based on the connections outlined above, establish one’s character determined by the understanding of and participation in spiritual wholeness. (See Figure: Holistic, Spiritual Model for School Leadership.) Discourse about politics in this paper, then, refers to ethical and moral action. The political realm of life is synonymous with the ethical and moral realm. Ethical, moral, and political decisions are based on significant beliefs about the world and one’s place in it. Personal choices, then, can be examined in terms of spiritual foundations. In essence, people choose to act in certain ways and to live their lives according to certain understandings of essential connections or codes of relationship.

The task of the education leader, then, becomes twofold: to examine the spiritual connections, their holistic and individual nature, and to examine the nature of the deliberately lived moral, ethical and political life that grows out of such an understanding. At its best political action becomes a moral duty. At its worst it becomes action that ignores spiritual roots and is amoral or becomes action that deliberately defies spiritual roots and is immoral. When one considers the alternative to living in recognition of these spiritual roots—death of the spirit
of the person—, political action becomes a profoundly sacred duty, and moral school leadership becomes an entity of the most valuable and necessary kind.

*The Importance of the Language/Lexicon of Myth*

Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton (1985) in *Habits of the Heart* write about American families and their basic concerns about the aspects of life of most concern to them—families, communities, good ways to live, teaching their children, responsibility. Significantly, however, Bellah and colleagues found that most of the persons that they interviewed hesitated to speak about morality and community, keeping these entities “relegated to the realm of private anxiety, as if it would be awkward or embarrassing to make it public” (p. vii). Many of us have been in public schools where this same type of anxiety exists as a norm. The danger is that language, the key to communication, is necessary for the expression of our deepest desires, thoughts and ideas. To lose the language of private concern would mean losing the possibility to communicate about entire areas of deepest importance. Our discourse would be left to ideas, concepts, and concerns of lesser importance, those defined by the larger public culture as acceptable for conversation. The language of myth is powerful enough to engage us in discourse about being fully human. The language of myth is sacred, profound, and reverent—the language of ultimate concern.

The term *ultimate concern* used here is captured from Paul Tillich (1957) who saw the human predicament as a discussion of what it meant for an individual in community to be free in a social context, to express ideas, to disagree with the government, and to act on the question of *ultimate concern*, which he believed to have true authority over one’s life. Tillich writes about the *ground of being* as the object of ultimate concern. People, he believed were most and ultimately concerned about the reason for their being, about the foundation for their lives. Both
Tillich’s theology and myth focus on the importance of connections to the creative power of the universe, to Being-Itself. Both stress the necessity of connections such as the “ground” or “foundation” of one’s being (discussed in this paper as spiritual aspects) as the determiners of one’s actions (discussed in this paper as political aspects) within community. Both Tillich’s theology and the mythic framework developed in this paper hold that these grounded and foundational connections are sacred by nature. Tillich stresses the essential nature of mythic and symbolic language for the definition and preservation of community.

Sally McFague (1982) argues that metaphors are the primary source of our language and knowledge because they call forth truth and still retain the tension between the it is and it is not (p. 13), that is, between what is reality and the possibilities that could instead become a new reality. McFague further writes on metaphor:

Good metaphors shock, they bring unlikes together, they upset conventions, they involve tension, and they are implicitly revolutionary….Metaphorical thinking [is]…prophetic…[and] projects, tentatively, a possible transformed order and unity yet to be realized.

(p.17)

The mythic language framework is based on language that can communicate ultimate concern. Equally, the language of the mythic framework must have the ability to reveal and to communicate in two directions. While it must be able to get at the ground or essence of existence, the sacred connections, it must also have the capacity to carry its character and significant revelation about the nature of our sacred connections to other persons. It must be a language that people feel comfortable using—i.e., it must be perceived to be ordinary and available to all people and yet have the ability to make extraordinary comparisons, ones which surprise us into new meaning and insights. Myth is story, metaphorical story, that works in two
directions—both unspoken, or spiritually foundational, and spoken, or politically action based—to produce meaning. As metaphorical language it gets at the sacred and spiritual connections with the ultimate while at the same time prompting exegesis and hermeneutic interpretation of our current political and cultural situation.

To contribute to the situational problem of our age—to survive—then, myth as metaphor must be able to perform two functions: it must show us the “ground of being” (the spiritual connections) and provide direction and focus for our actions (moral and ethical living). Essentially, it must be spiritual and political, showing us the sacred nature of living.

*Mythic Perspectives: Jung, Neumann, Eliade, Campbell*

The thought bases for the connection of psychological theory to myth and education comes from Carl G. Jung who wrote about archetypes, defined as repeated themes, symbols, and images, that originate in the collective unconscious and have an impact on the conscious, the personal unconscious, and the collective unconscious (the origin). Jung thought that as the storehouse for archetypes, the collective unconscious exerts the most influence on personality and on the collective development of human beings. Believing that certain archetypes appeared in the unconscious of all persons, Jung proposed that there was a universal quality to personality development. In “The Psychology of the Child Archetype” (Jung, 1958), he writes that we are as connected to our archetypal foundations as remaining alive is dependent upon the connection between our body and its organs (p.120). The survival of humankind as a collectivity of positively integrated and functioning beings depends, according to Jung, then on asserted efforts of the personality to become whole, to work towards individuation—to integrate the conscious and unconscious into a properly functioning psyche. The key to the positive and proper holistic development of the individual and, therefore, of the human race is the collective unconscious, the
myth/archetype level of our psyche, which provides the foundation of our development and roots for our humanity.

A student of Jung and a physician, Eric Neumann (1949/1954) expanded Jung’s ideas of the archetype in *The Origins and History of Consciousness*, published in German in 1949 and in English in 1954. In this work he outlined repeated themes and symbols of the mythological archetypes, showing their relationship to psychology and to culture. Adopting an evolutionary and developmental view of personal and historical consciousness, Neumann shows that myth is the hinge upon which a holistic and healthy development depends. Both personal and collective development depends on rootedness in and understanding of the archetypes of the collective unconscious revealed in myth. Neumann calls upon us to look for images in the collective unconscious that can educate us about what it means to be *centroverted*, or psychologically mature, individuals who operate in society under the rules of a “new ethic.”

In *Depth Psychology and the New Ethic*, published in German in 1949 and in English in 1969, Neumann described the then world crisis in terms of a collective inability to deal with evil. He (1949/1969) writes:

No appeal to old values and ideals can shield us from the recognition that we live in a world in which evil in man is emerging from the depths on a gigantic scale and confronting us all, without exception, with the question: “How are we to deal with this evil?”…The phenomenon which brands our epoch is a collective outbreak of the evil in man, on a scale never before manifested in world history. (pp. 25-26)

Deciding that the “old ethic” carried “an assertion of the absolute character of certain values which are represented by moral ‘oughts’” (p.33), Neumann concludes that the heart of the human problem resides in the fact that certain symbols became codified and, as such, deny the negative
While the “old ethic” denies the shadow side and causes the split in the collective psyche, the “new ethic” accommodates being psychologically *autonomous* rather than *good*, signaling a shift from the outside values to an inside conversation with one’s own psyche. Neumann shows the absolute necessity of the connection between the moral or political life of humans and the inner connection with the psyche. Neumann proposes that to some degree good and evil must reside together in the “new ethic” so that in the process of centroversion “creative processes” will “give birth to new values” (p.103). Neumann relates the doing of evil to the classic development of the archetypal hero who commits certain crimes in order to liberate the ego and grow to maturity (pp. 103-105).

In essence, Neumann calls for a shift away from looking to the outside culture for behavioral codes to looking into one’s own psyche for guidance for each and every moral issue. He writes, “Whatever leads to wholeness is “good”; whatever leads to splitting is “evil” (1949/1969, p.127). To Neumann, then, there are images in the collective unconscious that have the ability to educate us about centroversion (psychological maturity) and how to operate politically under “new ethic” rules, integrating both good and necessary bad into our lives. This integration provides for the prevention of perverse social disasters like those of the past which arose from the repression and suppression of archetypal images.

Mircea Eliade wrote widely about mythic patterns, especially in rituals of primitive peoples. Eliade (1958) sees myth as having the paradigmatic function of justifying “the existence of the world, of man and of society” (p. 141). Myth seen as sacred history is paradigmatic in that it “relates how things came to be…[and] lays the foundations for all human behavior and all social and cultural institutions” (pp. x-xi). Of modern humankind Eliade saw a
lack of significant initiation ceremonies that define the individual and related social roles and connections to the past and the future.

Eliade writes that modern persons suffer anxiety because we have not been taught about our sacred roots and are, therefore, yearning for meaning in life and death. Eliade adds that we are also a people who lack maturity since to be mature includes knowledge of and connection to the sacred. Further, he proposes that we avoid maturity because it has little to offer to a world that promotes youth and avoids the old. Interestingly, this view is counter to the mores of cultures where rites of passage are celebrated and where old age is viewed as the embodiment of wisdom. Eliade further adds that maturity in our culture gives us no prescriptions for conduct and no promises of procreation or life. Instead, he posits, it represents a nearness to death in an unmeaning form—nothingness. Eliade believes that while some persons of the past century identify themselves as profane, persons cannot truly live profane lives because the sacred (spiritual) emerges unexpectedly from the collective unconscious to remind them and us today of the sacredness of our natures. Eliade suggests that sacred images appear in many places, one of which is modern literature in characters disguised as mythic figures (pp. 134-135). Eliade expresses a concern that modern people have the inability to recognize essential connections and that this inability, this disconnection, causes anxiety, a form of alienation.

The popular writer and lecturer on myth Joseph Campbell writes primarily about the need for modern people to be involved in myth which, he believes, contains the essential instructions for productive living. Campbell, in a 1987 interview, outlined his view of the basic importance of mythology as a collection of metaphors or “an organization of symbolic images and narratives metaphorical of the possibility of human experience and fulfillment in a given culture at a given time” (Abrams, 1987, p. B8). Expounding further upon this view, Campbell’s (1972) essay titled
“Schizophrenia—the Inward Journey,” from *Myths to Live By*, reveals his concern for education, alienation and positive connections. Campbell in writing about children reminds parents of their duty to be mindful of “signals which they are imprinting on their young …[signals that] will attune them to, and not alienate them from, the world in which they are going to have to live” (p. 220).

His concern for having these kinds of life-giving and healthy spiritual connections is discussed in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1968) where he describes a kind of immaturity or disconnection existing in our society that proceeds from the refusal to acknowledge myth as a spiritual aid in our individual and social development. Campbell writes, “We [as adults] remain fixated to the unexorcized images of our infancy, and hence disinclined to the necessary passages of our adulthood” (p. 11). Further, Campbell writes about the American version of aging:

There is even a pathos of inverted emphasis: the goal is not to grow old, but to remain young; not to mature away from Mother, but to cleave to her. And so, while husbands are worshiping at their boyhood shrines, being the lawyers, merchants, or masterminds their parents wanted them to be, their wives, even after fourteen years of marriage and two fine children produced and raised, are still on the search for love. (pp. 11-12)

Campbell’s concern for connected—spiritual—meaning for modern people is primarily expressed in his writings about the hero, his “monomyth” or primary myth of significance for development of mature persons who can participate in life fully and positively. Campbell’s composite hero goes on a journey, reaches the threshold of adventure, encounters a shadow presence guarding the passage, journeys into a strange world, undergoes a supreme ordeal, gains the reward, expands consciousness, and therefore gains the understanding of personal being. The hero returns home a resurrected, spiritual leader who restores the world. Campbell’s hero returns
as a role model with spiritual understandings of the world and a belief about what it means to be a mature human living in the world. In a real sense the hero, through a series of transforming ordeals that resemble rites of passage of primitive societies, becomes a *spiritual model* as well as a *political model* in that the lived life is one of knowing first hand the significance of connections to the ultimate, to the created world, to other humans, and to the self. The hero acts accordingly and teaches others in the social order about the nature of the spiritual and its meaning for mature living.

Campbell’s hero, Eliade’s traditional ceremonies, and Neumann’s idea of centroversion all teach the concept of life meaning and maturity from the perspective of connections to the spiritual and sacred aspects of our lives. These writers propose that it is only from this framework that we can participate meaningfully in political and moral action based upon spiritual connections to the ultimate, oneself, the environmental world, and others.

**Inferences for School Leadership**

One of the first inferences from this study of myth is that education leaders, to be effective in ways that combat alienation, must promote community and find ways to instill personal meaning and social justice. In essence, visionary leaders adhere to the mythic canon for leadership and exhibit the characteristics of the hero. The leader must have reached spiritual maturity by understanding, striving for, and continuing to deepen the spiritual connections to the ultimate, the self, others, and the creation. The leader must have experienced alienation, fought the “dragon,” and emerge changed in connected and spiritual ways, a new person.

Spiritual maturity here is a reference to a vigilant commitment to the leader’s own connections and a clear commitment to providing a school place where students, teachers, and all members know that the leader’s commitment is to a vision of school as community where
members examine and strengthen the essential spiritual connections of students as a means of combating alienation. Following the mythic canon, then, of moral decision-making based upon essential connections, the leader would make and support school decisions based upon holistic, spiritual connections and institute school organizations that provide for the opportunity of experiencing and understanding these connections by all in the community, especially students. Through leadership decisions, community stakeholders, especially students, begin to understand that life, without alienation, is filled with the meaningful, hard work of forming, preserving and acting upon defined spiritual connections. The leader’s actions of measured decision making and support are by nature moral and political.

*Implications for the Voice of the Leader*

For the education leader by example to describe the vision, mission and/or belief system is not enough. Those who assume leadership roles, in order to be transformatively effective, must also assume a *prophetic voice*. In essence, they must be heroes who have traveled the challenging journey of the monomythic hero and who have surfaced in the role of the leader with new insight, with a new vision about the leadership position and its call for promoting wholeness. The education leader, to measure up to the tenets of the mythic canon, must also emerge with a prophetic voice in the sense of being able to describe what exists and propose a better school vision in a language that all can hear and understand. Through the questions asked; through the stories told; through the interpretation of the past, the present and the future; through the words chosen, education leaders must use the powerfully understandable language, referred to here as the *prophetic voice*. Without prophetic voice the hero leader leads by example and with power. With a prophetic voice a school leader can lead not only by example and with power but also through the deliberate empowerment of those in the community. This
empowerment would come through an understanding of politics (actions) grounded in spirituality (the foundation of holistic action). The necessity of establishing personal meaning and of making moral decisions becomes an outgrowth of this empowerment.

The hero journey—the challenging journey of diving deep and surfacing—is also the journey of education. Meaningful, authentic education, by nature, leads to change so powerful that it is of a transformative and resurrective nature. The monomythic hero’s transformative ordeal, his diving deep and surfacing, makes him a new person. This is the purpose of education. By extension, it is the purpose of the hero with a prophetic voice—to offer the opportunity for education so powerful that it is life altering. Just as education through the mythic canon transformed the leader, the transformed leader, then, guides members of the community through a similar educative and transformative journey. It becomes a sacred, moral duty.

The education leader described above is one who has the ability by example and through word to convince the education community that “everything is at stake” (Brueggemann, 1982, p. 7). Walter Brueggemann, in Creative Word writes about this concept as a canonical process where the conversation, the education debate, focuses on defining the most important truths, laws, and principles of being. Brueggemann writes:

It follows that the educational process, faithfully carried out, can be performed only by those who submit to the canonical process. Everything is at stake for them in the educational process because that process is intimately linked to the canonical process, where everything is likewise at stake….Canon has to do with life. (p.7)

Not to be alienated from life itself spiritually and politically means submission to transformation. The prophetic voice of the leader, Brueggemann writes, enables “a radical, disruptive act or statement which supersedes the old order…and…truth as ‘interruption in the continuity of life’”
This “surprise and authority of new, disruptive words” (p. 46) calls others into seeing the truth if they have not already seen it for themselves. This prophetic voice gives the leader the “capacity to draw new pictures, form new metaphors, and run bold risks of rhetoric” (p. 52), all of which can educate the imagination. The contrast that arises from juxtaposing the prophet’s poetic speech with that of the king’s rhetoric (p. 54), or expected, political talk by a governmental official, highlights truth in startling ways and calls for a new vision. This call is transformative and embodies wisdom. The call is for the community to hear and to see differently from the culture at large. This call is to a community for action, not just to individuals as individuals.

*Inference for School Organization, Policy and Curriculum*

The mythic canon also has implications for school organizational structures to provide a place for individuals to have equal opportunity to learn about, develop and express their voices as they participate in the educative journey. The structures that most nearly provide for the needs of the mythic canon would be those that are democratic in nature. Ulrich C. Reitzug (1998) in “Bureaucratic and Democratic Ways of Organizing Schools: Implications for Teachers, Principals, Students, Parents, and Community” writes that “organizations are formed for purposes of accomplishing objectives that individuals would not be able to accomplish working alone” (p. 351). Knowing that mythic leaders adopt as their moral (political) duty the education of all members of the community, especially students, it appears to be essential that community members have equal opportunity to develop voice, to know about essential spiritual connections and to act upon them. The vision promoted here is for school leadership that ensures that all voices are heard and expressed, that governance is shared, that education and its processes promote the challenging inquiry-based discourse of shared leadership and responsibility for others. The concern is for the common good. In school communities created from this vision,
students will have an opportunity to learn about and establish their own connections for personal meaning and an opportunity to study about and try out their own voices and solutions to problems based upon essential personal connections.

**School Leadership Model: Questions for Organization, Policy, and Curriculum**

In applying this model, a school leader would continually search for fuller personal understandings of the essential connections outlined above and, at the same time, seek to translate the foundational nature of these connections to the larger school community. The school community would then be responsible for applying the model first to those aspects of schooling most directly affecting the lives of students. The following questions focusing on the holistic, spiritual model for school leadership provide a more comprehensive alternative to leadership decision-making for a positive, non-alienating school culture than those currently in use. This vision supports education where students can thrive, not just survive.

*The Foundational Framework*

The following questions are offered for formulating decisions about organization, policy and curriculum in schools.

**Question Set 1: Establishing Spiritual Connections**

Do school leaders examine decisions involving organization, policy and curriculum for the capacity to teach students about and provide opportunity for the healthy development of holistic, spiritual foundational connections to the self?

Do school leaders examine decisions involving organization, policy and curriculum for the capacity to teach students about and provide opportunity for the healthy development of holistic, spiritual foundational connections to others?
Do school leaders examine decisions involving organization, policy and curriculum for the capacity to teach students about and provide opportunity for the healthy development of holistic, spiritual foundational connections to the environment?

Do school leaders examine decisions involving organization, policy and curriculum for the capacity to teach students about and provide opportunity for the healthy development of holistic, spiritual foundational connections to an ultimate being?

*Question Set Two: Using Spiritual Connections to Make Moral, Political Decisions for Action*

Do school leaders analyze decisions involving organization, policy and curriculum for the capacity to teach students to think critically and to act deliberately upon decisions that positively impact healthy, spiritual connections to the self?

Do school leaders analyze decisions involving organization, policy and curriculum for the capacity to teach students to think critically and to act deliberately upon decisions that positively impact healthy, spiritual connections to others?

Do school leaders analyze decisions involving organization, policy and curriculum for the capacity to teach students to think critically and to act deliberately upon decisions that positively impact healthy, spiritual connections to the created environment?

Do school leaders analyze decisions involving organization, policy and curriculum for the capacity to teach students to think critically and to act deliberately upon decisions that positively impact healthy, spiritual connections to an ultimate being?

This is the proposed holistic, spiritual model and these are the questions of ultimate concern for schools and the students that schools serve.
References


Figure: Holistic, Spiritual Model for Leadership

ESSENTIAL, SPIRITUAL CONNECTIONS

The Self  The Person  Environment

The Other  The Ultimate Being

DECISIONS BASED UPON THESE SPIRITUAL CONNECTIONS

RESULTS: MORAL (POLITICAL) ACTION