

Exceptional Educators: Investigating Dimensions of their Practice

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Abstract:

A view is proposed that being a skillful educator requires more than consummate knowledge of subject matter, good pedagogical technique, and even an ability to form good relationships with students. The position taken is that central to becoming a truly gifted educator is an integrated process of achieving accomplishment and skill as a human being with self-awareness, the ability to do personal inner-work, relational abilities, and ability to facilitate the group and community development dimensions of a classroom. The ineffable aspect of such educators is that they readily engage students in existing circumstances both personally and pedagogically. Ideas are offered to further investigation into the development and nurturance of such educators.

Key Words:

teacher education; reflective practice; inner work; exceptional educators; skillful educators; holistic education.

Introduction

Wisdom is not competence in one skill or many skills. It is the ability to recognize strengths and weaknesses in ourselves and others. Thus, a wise teacher knows that although he may not surpass certain students in specific skills, he can give them what they need to become better individuals.

– Lieh-Tzu (as cited in Wong, 1995, p. 113)

Educators whom students revere because they have a positive impact and influence on their lives and learning are truly gifts to humankind. In this paper, ideas about Exceptional Educators are explored conceptually through living inquiry¹, self-study, and literature search. Exceptional educators as identified by students and colleagues have exceptional qualities personally and pedagogically. This inquiry grew mainly out of the first author's doctoral dissertation (Cohen, 2006) that spoke to the human dimension in education and the importance of personal development and awareness for educators, and also out of his thirty-five years of work as a psychotherapist where he saw on a consistent basis the deleterious effects of failures in attending to the human – to be specific, personal and interpersonal – dimensions. Among the many possible constituents of exceptional educators, the foci of this paper are two aspects of the human dimension: 1) the inner experience and inner work practice of such teachers and 2) their Deep Democracy practices (Mindell, 2001; Cohen, 2002) as demonstrated by their skill in facilitating a classroom through a community development process. Inner experience and inner work practice refer to teachers' ability to notice, track, and work creatively with the alchemical potential of their own inner stew. Deep Democracy is a theory and practice that identifies, validates, and creates dialogue opportunity with all aspects of classroom participants' interpersonal and intrapersonal experiences. The central question addressed by this paper is how do educator's practices in these two domains contribute to igniting "fires" in the hearts of students.

The proposed conception of the exceptional educator is that he or she is an exemplary human being with strong qualities of warmth, ethical integrity, caring, supportiveness, educational vision, verve, experience, discernment in the domain of teaching, and insight into who the student is as a developing human being; he/she also possesses strong abilities to facilitate classroom contact. This conception is consistent with work that identifies strong content knowledge, sensitivity to the contexts of multiple classroom "worlds," and strong knowledge of self/teacher identity as characteristics of expert teachers (Arlin, 1999; Berliner, 2001; Shulman, 1986; Sternberg & Horvath, 1995; Turner-Bisset, 1999). Exceptional educators are adept in their capacity to enact human and humane qualities, ability to access their inner world, and sensitivity to the thoughts and feelings of others. They also possess a finely tuned sense of the inter-subjective, including the community realm. They are capable of "complexifying" the world (Berliner, 2001, p. 477) to accommodate and respond to students' needs. As well, they are passionate and very knowledgeable about subject matter. They are skilled in facilitating opportunities for subject matter assimilation and for relating subject matter to

¹ We are indebted to Dr. Karen Meyer from the Curriculum and Pedagogy Department in the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia for this term and its implications. The term is not a formalized research methodology. Instead it is suggestive of inquiry that is alive and a view of life as a process of inquiry. Four dimensions within which inquiry takes place are time, place, language, and self-other.

the personal and vice-versa. The exceptional educator exhibits qualities of wisdom and simultaneously demonstrates openness to learning. While these qualities can be applied to just about any profession and personal relationship our purpose here is to relate this idea to educators and educational practice.

What can be said about these teachers in whose presence students seemingly never get tired or bored? What is it about these rare individuals to whom students willingly give full attention? What happens in that one class that students can't wait to get to and in which clock watching does not occur, in that class where students feel they can be themselves and at the same time that they transcend their usual selves? These are teachers who are also learners, risk-takers, stabilizers, and, above all, persons (Vaines, 1974). Have you not had one or two teachers like that? Here is a life-direction altering experience of encounter that one of us (Cohen) had with an exceptional teacher:

One significant example is from a very early point in my life and career. Dr. Peter Lavelle was a psychiatrist from Ireland who was the director of a residential treatment center for severely disturbed adolescent boys and girls. He was my teacher even though I was not a student in a school. He interviewed me along with his second in command for a child care counsellor position. I learned some time later that the second in command had recommended strongly that I not be hired as she felt I just did not have what it took to perform the job requirements. Peter saw my weaknesses and, beyond them, my potential and overrode her recommendation. Peter confronted me on several occasions, encouraged me on others, and essentially told me, "You are sitting on your own power. You need to work on yourself and access your potential." I was able to take advantage of the opportunities offered and become one of the top counsellors in the organization. I had to face my own shadow², learn skills, and learn how to work closely with others. I had the potential; I was supported to access this potential; and I was awake enough to take full advantage of the opportunity. I learned that crisis is opportunity. The four ingredients in this learning were (a) I was vulnerable, (b) I had a crisis, (c) I had a teacher who was willing to work with me, and (d) the environment allowed me to absorb the learning. The significant qualities of my teacher were (a) he had insight into me, (b) he had confidence in his views, (c) he had skill, (d) he had a view of the process, (e) he was able to see me in the context of the overall milieu, and (f) he knew how to relate to me. These are characteristics of exceptional teachers.

It is not a big leap to move from identifying the qualities of exceptional educators to identifying the gifts of any educator. To remind the reader, our interest in this research on exceptional educators is not just to identify and learn about what they are like, but, additionally, to see how we can structure and conduct teacher education in such a way that we can help to bring out and foster their qualities and dimensions in all teachers. A key idea we have in this endeavor is that the exceptional educator takes his or her classroom experience as personal and professional feedback that is part of a personal

² Shadow refers to the Jungian concept of material that is unconscious and can consist of unresolved personal material and/or personal potential

growth process aimed towards personal development. In other words, exceptional teachers are exceptionally good students who learn personally and pedagogically from their own teaching and classroom experiences. Our emphasis in this paper is on the personal dimension as we believe that while reflections on practice have been in the foreground, reflections on personal experience and their use for personal and professional development for teachers have been largely ignored. We believe that a major factor in teachers being experienced as exceptional is an outcome of their ability and interest in paying close attention to the feedback their students give to their teaching and using this feedback to fuel their own inner work. If students are unhappy, bored, agitated, and so on in the class, exceptional teachers do not simply label these students “problem students,” but reflect on their sense of self and their own limiting ways of being; they do not leap to the conclusion that the problem lies totally with the student.

Students’ Experience

Students in the presence of exceptional educators feel that they are truly recognized, that they can be themselves, and that they have permission and great encouragement to be and express what is in them that truly wants emergence. They feel their own sense of groundedness and connection. They find themselves excited about the subject matter. They feel a part of something. They love being in the presence of the teacher. They feel welcomed by the teacher and by the classroom group. This latter emanates from the teacher’s ability to facilitate a connected community experience for students. Students feel that they can approach such teachers with problems, questions, feedback, and successes, and that they will be welcomed. They feel that they are seen and accepted for who they are. They will find themselves, when not with the teacher, hearing the teacher’s voice in their consciousness, evaluating what the teacher would say to them about a particular situation, and carrying on conversations with the inner representation of the teacher. Students will work harder in such classes because they feel that they are doing what matters to them.

Based on the feedback that we received from our students, we identify the following key points as exceptional teachers’ qualifications: 1) holding the space in the classroom in a particular way (that way being described with some difficulty, but involving opening, rather than narrowing or closing the space, for students’ participation), 2) having a process-orientation, 3) demonstrating that he or she is a learner also, 3) integrating the personal and the curricular, and 5) modeling that he or she is on the same level as a human being and a participant as the students, while holding firmly his or her responsibilities and supplying the benefits of their knowledge and experience.

Feedback on a teacher nominated as excellent by former students in a study on university teaching (Sheffield, 1974) also indicates the timelessness of the qualities mentioned above:

Professor O’Grady loved his subject and thus inspired others to love it. He personalized English literature for each student, demonstrating that it was a living part of the society from which it evolved He had a sense of humour, personal integrity, and self-discipline. He showed a personal interest in each student, and

a respect for the intelligence and opinions of his students.... You felt you were learning *with* him as well as *from* him. (Sheffield, 1974, p. 29)

We can see that the qualities outlined in the preceding paragraph seem to have been exemplified by Professor O'Grady. However, the comment, "learning *with* him as well as *from* him" deserves to be highlighted, as this one statement seems to capture the essence of all the points outlined in the previous paragraph. Exceptional educators are those who have an exceptional ability to be present to students, and accompany them, side-by-side or, at times, hand-in-hand, in their learning journey.

Vialle and Quigley (2002) surveyed students on the essential characteristics of effective teachers. They found that students placed a higher value on "personal-social qualities" than on intellectual qualities. Vialle and Quigley's finding is important as it tells us that what students are looking for and value firstly are the human and relational qualities of their teachers. Vialle and Quigley's research supports our ideas about the importance of the human dimension in educational environments as a foundation for learning about being human, for providing a sense of connection and community, and in setting the ground for curriculum learning. These educators have exceptional abilities to relate to a broad range of learners, situations, and relationships, and their capacity to respond in-the-moment is exceptional. But the question remains. How do some teachers have or come to have these exceptional personal and interpersonal abilities? The authors of this paper take the position that these abilities are not just innate "gifts," which only a few teachers have. Our position is that these personal and interpersonal abilities of exceptional teachers can be cultivated, and this paper is an exploration of how such cultivation can be done.

The Gift of Presence

Returning to the notion above that exceptional teachers have great ability to be present to students and accompany them in both their personal and learning journey, our first inquiry is into the nature of presence. By presence we mean the ability to be consciously present in-the-moment; to be able to see, feel, know, and notice present experience, which enhances the potential for a strong, felt connection between educator and learners. How does one go about learning to be totally present? How does one come to have such a powerful presence that it has the effect of awakening, animating, and sustaining the student's own sense of his or her presence, that is, a sense of being wide awake, animated, and interested?

Kirk Schneider (2004), a humanistic psychologist, speaks about this quality of presence in terms of certain qualities of consciousness:

The Fluid Center: ...any sphere of human consciousness which has as its concern the widest possible relationships to existence; or to put it another way, it is structured inclusiveness – the richest possible range of experience within the most suitable parameters of support. ... The fluid center is a pause, a pivot point, and a space between. It veers between constraint (structure, reticence) on the one hand and expanse (spontaneity, brashness) on the other. It can be inner and outer, physical and mental, or it can emphasize only one of these self-dimensions. Choice is the fulcrum of the fluid center. (pp. 10-11)

When the teacher is grounded and centered in this “Fluid Center” of his/her consciousness, he/she can attend, sensitively and vitally, to the living reality of another human being. The teacher’s fluid center is ever moving in response to all the conditions on the continuum between the inner (the teacher’s consciousness) and the outer worlds (the student). Mindell (2001/1994)) elaborates on this concept of the fluid center and its ability to shift in and out of the inner and the outer worlds with the help of another useful concept, *metacommunicator*. Cohen (2006) has applied this conception of metacommunicator to describe the teacher’s ability to attend to the living reality of the student:

The metacommunicator is the part of consciousness that makes it possible for the educator to shift fluidly between a multiplicity of roles and perspectives, and to monitor and respond in-the-moment as the context continually suggests. The metacommunicator mediates between inner and outer experience, and both facilitates and develops as an outcome of conscious attention to experiences. This level of awareness gets the educator out of the intrinsic trap of positioning and provides opportunity to facilitate between positions. This supports processes of integration and heightened awareness. (p. 47)

While we all have the potential offered by the Fluid Center of our beings just because we are human, its full manifestation is a challenge. There are many obstacles to fully manifesting the Fluid Center in each of us, teachers and students alike. Schooling itself seems opposed to this experience, which underlines the importance of the exceptional teacher’s role in nurturing this potential in themselves and in their students.

Rollo May (1996) describes the prevailing culture as having a “schizoid” condition:

[Schizoid] means out of touch; avoiding close relationships; the inability to feel. I do not use the term as a reference to psychopathology, but rather as a general condition of our culture and the tendencies of people who make it up.... the schizoid condition is a general tendency in our transitional age. (p. 16)

These conditions and tendencies, if anything, seem to have intensified since these words were written. Schools are focused on testing, production, and results. This certainly seems to be a formula to solidify the schizoid tendencies about which May writes.

The propensity in education to evaluate based on quantities of information imbibed and regurgitated on tests now ensures that the focus away from feeling and contact between human beings in classrooms is enshrined as the epitome of “good” education (Nieto, 2003). Too often the outcome is the technocratic woman and man – the person who is exquisitely capable of functioning by instrumentalist rationality central to technocracy and not ‘distracted’ by any relational or emotional experience. And this outcome seems to be the peak achievement that can be anticipated in education. This insidious movement towards a world of technicization and resulting instrumentalism would explain globally destructive attitudes towards other humans and the environment³

³ We are certainly not meaning to paint technology or all users of technology with one brush or to negate the immense advantages that have accrued from technological advances. Indeed, technology per se is not really the

(Bai, 2001; Macy & Brown, 1998). Truly exceptional educators exemplify what it is to be a feeling, compassionate human being and represent an opposition to the prevailing winds in education. They have the capacity to see the spark in students, no matter how difficult it may be to discern, and have extraordinary abilities to fan that spark and create the optimal conditions for the gifts of every student to emerge. But again, from the perspective of teacher education, the most pressing question is, how do we cultivate the exceptional within all teachers when their own education has stifled their natal capacity to manifest fire and light? Our response is that they need to undertake their own inner work, get in touch with their own diminishment, and work to redress it. They need to come alive and manifest their potential for full presence. Until they have actualized this potential, they cannot provide the necessary initiatory spark for their students.

Inner Experience and Inner Work Practice

Inner experience refers to the living experience in the emotional, intellectual, physical, and spiritual lives of exceptional educators. Inner work practice is the capacity to attend to and, in some meaningful way, work with these experiences that are in response to inner and outer experiences occurring in their classrooms⁴. In some instances this reflection is virtually instantaneous within the context of the moment, and on other occasions the educator may take the memory of an experience into a reflective process outside of the classroom context. Exceptional educators possess the ability to transform the “reflective outcome” into a meaningful response in the classroom, which may lead to further reflection. For the exceptional educator, this is part of their pedagogical practice. It is not an extra. It enhances their practice and brings the numinous into the foreground in classrooms. Turner-Bisset’s (1999) work places knowledge of self as central to the ability to reflect on one’s practice at a meaningful level. Inner work practice requires a commitment to the development of the self that observes and works with the inner and intersubjective experiences that occur on a moment-to-moment basis in educational environments.

Inner work is the practice of recognizing the personal and transpersonal roots of the human dimension. Classroom experience and inner work are inter-related. Inner work will point to a change in practice and approach. A change in approach will lead to different responses from students, which may lead to further inner work. The contention is that exceptional educators are inner workers who are fascinated by and interested in their inner experience and see it as part of their practice. Classrooms represent a great opportunity for self-development for educators, a benefit when properly and well used that offers great personal inner work possibilities for educators. This work takes place both in-the-moment and after the fact and facilitates personal growth towards wholeness for the educator.

Classrooms provide an endless supply of experiences that are catalytic. The “side-benefit” to this inner work is that teachers can become much more alert, aware, compassionate, and relationally capable in their classrooms. As well, they will have a

problem. The problem is technocracy and its built-in instrumental rationality whereby we become human beings who are like machines lacking quintessential human qualities such as compassion, love, and wisdom.

⁴ It is beyond the scope of this paper to go into extensive detail about inner work methods and process. For this see *Gateway to the Dao-Field: Essays for the Awakening Educator* (Cohen, A., 2009)

great capacity to convey their true feeling about and towards students and curriculum content. The truth is a more crucial expression for a teacher than any particular feeling. Of course, passion for subject matter is contagious, but not every teacher is passionate about every subject. Authenticity, the expression of true feelings, is a substantial and valuable pedagogical practice and the opposite, pretending to be one way when feeling another, breeds lethargy and apathy in students. The truth when combined with passion is absorbing and liberating.

Inner work leads to better personal relationships with students. From our perspective, these personal relationships are of great value, personally rewarding, and open the way for all classroom experience. Exceptional educators are also modeling relationship and facilitating it within the classroom. Facilitating connection between students has a positive potential for feelings of safety in classrooms, both emotionally and physically. It is also preventative of exclusion, bullying of any sort, and isolation. Honesty, however slippery this concept may be, is invited, allowed, and brought out in the open. It is held as a cultural value in the classroom by the exceptional educator. The exceptional educator models his or her values in all aspects of classroom experience and interaction.

Classroom Practices

Parker Palmer (1998) made a now famous statement: "We teach who we are" (p.1). Who we are, that is, the quality of our presence so deeply affects our students that it is no exaggeration to say that they learn not so much by what we tell them but by how and who we are. Patterson (1973), a humanistic psychologist, stated the same thing: "The genuine teacher is, then, not using a method or a technique as something outside himself, for his methods or techniques are an integral part of himself" (p. 103). Indeed, Mahatma Gandhi put it most simply and powerfully: "My life is my message." Such teachers are leaders and demonstrate authenticity by which we mean a congruence of thought, feeling, body movement, and spirit that is exemplified by a teacher's in-the-moment demeanor or manner of being. Mindell (2001/1994) has called such demeanor 'metaskills.' Metaskills are the in-the-moment feelings and attitudes demonstrated verbally and non-verbally by the teacher that are reflective of the most deeply held values and beliefs. This authenticity is both a message in itself and a vehicle for messages of encouragement, care, and deep valuing of the human and non-human world. Exceptional educators demonstrate authenticity.

Exceptional teachers have facilitation skills and see themselves as facilitators of human interaction and learning. Cullum (Sullivan, 2004) tells us that students know that the teacher is the authority, and has the responsibility to set up the conditions and limits of the classroom atmosphere and culture. Within that structural framework, the teacher facilitates the creativity and learning of students. Such educators use these skills to develop the intersubjective and community dimensions of the classroom (Cohen, 2004a). The intent is that students will learn about themselves, the effect of a group on them, their effect on a group, classroom community development, and that an atmosphere will develop that optimizes curriculum content learning.

An important and under-recognized ability of exceptional teachers is their ability to facilitate meaningful connections between students on personal and curriculum learning

levels. The connections between students on a personal level are crucial to a sense of belonging to the classroom community and being an integral part of its ongoing development. The tendency in education to foreground output and achievement and to ignore leadership and teamwork values that grow out of such connections and process, has been noted by Kozlowski and Ilgen (2006).

Exceptional educators have excellent relational abilities. They are good listeners, excellent at expression, and are exemplars of simultaneous expression and listening (Cohen, 2004b). Exceptional educators set up a classroom structure that is consistent for each class. This consistency allows learners to focus on the creative and optimal use of time in each part of the class. They understand the use of structure and consistency to support feelings of security for learners and to encourage creativity and innovation.

Exceptional educators model and are encouraging of being personal; they also encourage outspokenness, quietness, the asking of “dumb questions,” innovative thinking and activity, and exploration of self and creative forms of inquiry, learning, and projects. The classroom is a laboratory that encourages experimentation. The classroom culture supports mistakes or “wrongness” as learning opportunities. As Rilke (1934/1954) suggested, living deeply into questions is encouraged. Sharing of human experience in-the-moment and overall is invited. Conflict and anger are invited in rather than suppressed, with the understanding that bringing these feelings out in the open is preventative to their showing up in more insidious forms and demonstrative of the possibilities to deal with these so-called negative feelings in a creative and constructive way. Classroom issues are in the open. Students are included in the responsibility for the classroom atmosphere and experience. Life in and out of the classroom is seen as contiguous. The boundaries are held to contain experience but not to separate different dimensions of the students’ worlds. Diversity is not just given lip service, but is invited in and is part of the process of a classroom community development process.

Examples of the Interaction between Inner Experience Practices and Classroom Experiences

An example of the relationship between inner work practice and classroom experience arose in a class that Cohen was teaching with twenty adults who represented seven different cultures in a certificate program at a community college:

I received an email from a woman in the class who was originally from mainland China. She said that she wasn’t sure that I was aware, or what if anything ought to be done, but she was noticing that during the experiential practice part of the class, the native speakers were tending to work with each other and the ESL students were mostly working together. In fact, I had noticed this, but the implications had not quite struck me. In my reflective inner work on this, I recalled my own experiences of feeling myself as an outsider. I was the smallest child until grade eight. I felt strongly that this lessened my chances for participation in various games. I was Jewish in a non-Jewish neighbourhood. I recalled and re-felt the feelings of helplessness and frustration as I wondered about the unfairness of not having access to that which I desired. I had a new and deeper understanding of what was taking place in my classroom. I came to class the

next time and said the following, “Our class is a microcosm of Canadian culture. About 40 % of our group do not speak English as their first language. As well, we have cultural diversity that is even beyond this number. We have the option to recreate what mostly occurs in the larger culture or we can move into a different possibility. I elaborated about language and culture issues, being an outsider, and the pain of not seeing any way to access the inner circles. There was some discussion. A few of the students from the dominant culture shared their thoughts and experiences, some of which showed that they were not immune to such experiences of subtle exclusion either. When it came time for the experiential exercise that evening, the pattern was undone and it continued thus for the remaining seven meetings of the class.

This had potential to be a very messy process. “Hot” issues such as same sex relationships, religious differences, cultural diversity, and so on provide both opportunity and pit-fall potential. Exceptional educators will enter into these situations, provide leadership and direction, and use them to facilitate community development and as pedagogical opportunities.

Implications for Teacher Education

The personal dimension and inner work needs to be addressed as a germane and central to teacher education. Pugh, in the film, *A Touch of Greatness* (Sullivan, 2004), tells us that teacher education has to centralize personal development of the pre-service teacher. The human dimension and personal development are integral aspects of teacher education at all levels and at every moment. They cannot be left out nor can they be add-on educational components that are taught separately from other aspects of teacher education. This means that educators of educators must be exemplars of this giftedness that centralizes becoming fully human, and that this becoming human and the humanness of students must be a central focus of any class in teacher education.

Teacher educators must become skilled with personal reflection and its translation into practice characterized by a range of metaskills. They must bring their metaskills into play as they engage with student teachers and as they facilitate the student teachers’ engagement that emphasizes authenticity and the personal with each other. The importance of time and effort being devoted to self-knowing and real knowing of colleagues within classroom environments must be validated in both theory and practice. This is a crucial underpinning to educator education and a substantial aspect of the abilities and foci of exceptional educators.

Achievement is related to the characteristics of teachers, not students (Nieto, 2003) – a critical distinction that is not often reflected in the design of educational research. Teacher education can attend to this distinction by engaging student teachers in deep reflection about their inner and outer experiences and the relationships between these experiences. “Knowing themselves helps teachers know their students” (Nieto, 2003, p. 391). Autobiography, reading and reflection, conversations with colleagues, and other opportunities to grow as individuals must be part of student teachers’ lives. They must consider what brought them to teaching and how their identities are implicated in their practice (Nieto, 2003).

Future Research Possibilities

Identification of exceptional educators employing the criteria discussed in this paper and then meeting with these educators to investigate their practice, observing them in classroom situations, and evaluating their practice in relation to these criteria are central to framing research on exceptional educators and identifying what is important in supporting teachers in work that is so much more than coverage of curriculum and implementation of instructional strategies. The exploration of the criteria described herein and other possible criteria through inquiry with exceptional educators is a potential avenue of research. Another area of inquiry that holds great promise is the ability of exceptional educators to evaluate and work with systemic issues, including the formation of strong collegial relationships, provision of leadership in the development of a cohesive faculty community, and the ability to work creatively and constructively with those in positions of power and authority. It is critical to involve and support teachers in the process of inner work and to plan research collaboratively. As well, educational researchers, like educators, must have a broad range of metaskills, the ability to perform inner work, and the ability to work collaboratively.

We end with twelve central perspectives and practices that we believe exceptional educators work with and to which they consistently refer and draw upon:

1. The ongoing discovery and inquiry into the purpose of a person's life and how to live well is core to all education. This discovery process is integrated with the adventure of the search for the source of all experience, along with the far reaches of its expression.
2. Apparently opposite conditions are seen as part of a whole within a field and are seen as being in relationship.
3. Any given moment and set of experiences is viewed as part of a process and not as a static event. Everything is viewed as "in motion."
4. Patterns are important. They lead to repetition and predictability. Some patterns are supportive and others are wearing and destructive.
5. Aspects of the individual appear in the collective and aspects of the collective appear in the individual.
6. Awareness is a critical dimension of life. It potentiates change and growth. Lack of awareness has an opposite tendency.
7. Making meaning is central and requires a combination of thought and feeling. Thoughts without feeling are like dry bones and feelings without thought are like a river over-running its banks. Humans have a propensity and a will to find/create meaning. Work towards integration of thought and feeling is ongoing even while accepting and valuing how things actually are at any given moment.
8. Humans have inner work (reflection on and work with personal inner experience) potential as an ongoing and central part of life, including professional life.
9. The depth and breadth of intimacy and connection that is possible, longed for, and needed is beyond the imagination of most, and it is incumbent on the educator to hold this vision even while accepting how things actually are.

10. A holistic vision of the educational system is held that includes forming strong cohesive bonds with colleagues, supporting faculty community development, and working cooperatively with those in leadership positions.
11. A highly advanced sense of empathy, characterized by the ability to feel and sense the experience of students.
12. The universe, both seen and unseen, is part of a field, within which there is an interconnectedness, and this can be referred to in any number of ways, including, G_D, Christ-Consciousness, the nagual, the Dao -Field (Cohen & Bai, 2007), or the void (Cohen, 2009, pp. 6-7).⁵

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