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I. Introduction: Why do I deal with Holistic Education (HE)?

Introduction of myself

I work in an institute for educational research and development sponsored by the Protestant churches in Germany, teacher associations as well as school associations (Comenius-Institut, see: www.comenius.de for more information).

Most of the projects I am involved with bring together European developments in the fields of education, religious education, intercultural and interreligious learning. There is increasing interest in comparative religious education as well as in the influence of European developments and their impact for education on the national or regional level. Existing European organizations and networks for religious education and issues of church and education promote co-operation and organize European exchange and dialogue through different projects and activities. I like to mention among others the Intereuropean Commission on Church and School and the Coordinating Group for Religion in Education in Europe (see www.iccsweb.org for more information). Other projects deal with ecumenical learning as a main concern of church based education.

A holistic approach to education challenges practices and concepts that mainly emphasize learning as a cognitive activity and policies that make economic benefit the primary aim. This has been a concern and a starting process of a holistic education study process of the World Council of Churches (1999-2005) where I was involved. One of the outcomes of this project is a Holistic Education Resource Book (Schreiner, Banev, Oxley, 2005).

The structure of my paper is:

1. Why holistic education?
2. Key terms of holistic education
3. Selected educational approaches
4. Perspectives for teacher training

A first reason for HE is because...

“We are creatures of *both* reason *and* emotion, mind *and* body, matter *and* spirit” (Riley-Taylor 2002, 67, italics in original).

This perspective is neglected by mainstream education that focuses primarily on the cognitive dimension and on a narrow concept of rationality.

The Holistic Education Resource Book starts with an article that gives reasons and answers why we need holistic education. The arguments can be summarised as follows:

Because we need to engage the whole person.

Because we need to engage whole persons in community.

Because there are many ways of learning and knowing.

Because however specialized our knowledge may be we need to see it in a whole context.

Because wholeness is the essence of Christian faith.

Because the work of the ecumenical movement is for wholeness.

Because we need to learn to live together in wholeness.

With my paper I try to give some substance to these statements.

HE is a movement of developing alternative educational theory and praxis on the following background:

- Modern education inducts young people into the culture of modernity. Holistic education questions some of the basic presupposition of modernity.
- The debate about holistic education takes place in a world where knowledge and ways of knowing become increasingly fragmented.
- It takes place in a world where education is demanded by economy and politics to prepare labour force and citizens that fit into the needs of a more and more globalized world. In a world where employment becomes more and more a luxury and where working places are cut off even when earnings of multinationals become very high. Those who defend this ridiculous development often use the argument of the dynamics of international competition to give reason for that kind of policy. This puts also high pressure on education. Education and

training should serve the needs of economy. Life opportunities, seen from an economic perspective, are created by knowing a lot about a small area of knowledge.

- Education concentrates on a particular form of intellectual knowledge, however many national curricula promote the development of the whole person, mention personal, spiritual and religious concerns

In summarizing HE is about:

1. a critique of modern education;
2. promoting a comprehensive understanding of knowing, teaching and learning;
3. affirming spirituality as being the core of life and hence central to education.

When we look through the number of books about HE we recognize the following titles:

Holistic Education is about

Seeking wholeness (Miller, 2000)

Educating the soul (Palmer, 1993, 1998)

Nourishing spirituality (Riley-Taylor, 2004)

Pedagogy of universal love (Nava, 2001)

Yearning for whole communities (Oldenski & Carlson, 2002)

A journey for a more holistic understanding of education (Palmer, 1993, 1998)

These are ambitious titles and approaches to education. A common characteristic of all these approaches is that they are more process or journey oriented than to reach a specific objective.

II. Key terms of Holistic Education

(1) Interconnectedness or the human search for connectedness.

The broader context of HE is based on the philosophical and epistemological concept of holism. "Holism is an alternative, critical worldview that sees all phenomena, all existence as intrinsically interrelated."

The butterfly effect is well known: The wing beat of a butterfly in China (or elsewhere) can create a thunderstorm in Europe." (Edward Lorenz 1963). What has been stated for phenomena in meteorology has been used to characterize effects of complex systems concerning to chaos theory. In different academic disciplines, theories and approaches, the search for a more holistic or integrated view can be found as a new and recent initiative. Examples: physical

science, systems theory, ecology, depth psychology and philosophy have given new ways to express “the awesome wholeness of reality” (Ron Miller).

A holistic understanding has been expressed in the language of religion and theology until the mid-twentieth century. And the yearning for wholeness is still a central image of religions that aim to transform reality.

Interconnectedness can refer to the whole person, wholeness in community, in society or in the world.

(2) Spirituality – affirming spirituality as being the core of life and hence central to education.

Holistic Educators take account of an inner core that lies beyond the physical, social, and other sources of personality. This can be called the “spiritual”. One example is the research of David Hay & Rebecca Nye about spirituality of children. They speak of “Relational Consciousness” to characterize that young children have an unusual level of awareness or perceptiveness. Their spiritual talk referred to how children related to reality; either to God, other people, themselves or the material world.

Theories and approaches Spirituality can be seen from very different perspectives. It should not be taken as an utterly mystical or other-world spirituality.

We should be aware of the different potentially conflicting spiritual traditions that range from an autonomous self-spirituality focused on shared human beliefs to spirituality that is the developing relationship of the individual, within community and tradition, to that which is of ultimate concern, ultimate value and ultimate truth (cf. Andrew Wright).

(3) From “either/or” thinking to “both/and” thinking

The either/or thinking, a dualistic perception of reality is dominant in what we call the western thinking based on Aristotle’s logic and Descartes’ subject/object split

(1) An example in social science is the approach of Ulrich Beck, a well known German sociologist, who has developed an approach to sociology that analyses developments in the so called second or reflective modernity. Main elements are the theory of risk society, forced individualization and multi-dimensional globalization. Beck sees these phenomenon’s combined as a radical form or dynamic of modernity that no longer can be described by a logic of ‘either-or’ when it comes to society and politics. His approach aims to overcome the dominant binary thinking, the exclusive ‘either-or-logic’ and substitute it by an inclusive ‘both-and-logic’ that overcomes the chains of national oriented thinking. He names his approach the *cosmopolitan view* that acknowledges the otherness of the other but also of us (Beck, 2004a, 2000b, 2007).

(2) Helmut Reich (physicist and social scientist) has developed a theory of *Relational and Contextual Reasoning* as a way of thinking. His approach offers a solution of a cognitive conflict when one seeks to bring together two or more competing theories. Reich's empirical studies show that we are able to connect two or more competing theories about the same phenomenon (Reich 2002).

We are able to think in a complementary way f.e. combining a religious and a scientific world view. Instead of a binary logic *either – or*, Reich speaks of a way of thinking that elucidates the relations of the partial theories with the explanandum and with each other as well as the details of the context dependence. He speaks of a *trivalent logic* of relational and contextual reasoning: two statements about the same explanandum are either compatible (both true concurrently), incompatible (never both true 'simultaneously') or non-compatible (not compatible simultaneously, but one is 'true' in one context respectively at one point in time, the other is true in a different context or in a different time.) RCR is 'situated', if one may say so, between dialectical and analogical thinking and shares some features with each.

Reich's theory illustrates what Niels Bohr (1885 – 1962), physicist and Nobel Prize winner, one of the giants in the development of Quantum Mechanics, has stated the **principle of complementarity**:

"The opposite of a true statement is a false statement, but the opposite of a profound truth can be another profound truth."

This quote defines a concept that is essential to thinking the world together – the concept of paradox. If we want to know what is essential, we must stop thinking the world into pieces and start thinking it together again.

Holistic education aims to see the dimensions of the world interconnected.

Bringing things together: the Four quadrants of Ken Wilber

Let me introduce to you briefly another perspective that supports interconnectedness of things. The American philosopher Ken Wilber has developed an integral approach that he named "A Theory of Everything". A theory of human consciousness and its evolution.

With spirit Wilber names the animating and unifying force and intelligence of the universe that humans may know in many ways, for instance, through love, recognition of the commonality of the other, or through mystical experience.

As part of his approach Wilber provides a model for an integral orientation to the various fields of human knowledge. This is called the 4 quadrants approach, it can be named also as four kinds of truth. Wilber differentiates four areas:

Exterior-Individual – empirical investigation and explanation of what is out there; observation and measurement; the objective world

Exterior- social – considering interacting systems out there

Interior- individual – awareness is turned inward, we find the world of subjective experience, consciousness, and meaning.

Interior- Cultural – The subjective world of the individual exists within and is influenced by culture.

Wilber favours a multidimensional approach to truth and tries the integration of science and spirituality, including western as well as eastern theories and philosophies, including the interior and the exterior.

“Could we create an educational practice that regularly moves in and out of these different perspectives? A multidimensional approach to truth tells us that the world is not just a singular ‘it’ to be measured, as scientism and reductionism have led us to believe, but that it also exists as a system and social structure, as individual subjective experience, and as cultural patterns.” (Hart, 2007, 61)

A holistic perspective means recognizing that no one view can take in the whole picture. Multiple and integrated perspectives are essential in the approach to knowledge.

In short Wilber’s analysis of the history of science shows that in all these quadrants, in all these four large camps major schools of thought and theories have been developed. Each of these “four quadrants” has its own particular type of truth or ‘validity claim’. Each of these quadrants is described in a different language. The existence of these different subjective and objectivistic, empirical, systems approaches is not the problem for Wilber.

The problem starts when it comes to any kind of reductionism or exclusivist view. Wilber’s critique deals especially with the aggressive attempt by modern science to completely reduce the entire Cosmos to a bunch of “its”. “That is, the “I” and “we” domains have been almost entirely colonized by the it-domains, by scientific materialism, positivism, behaviorism, empiricism, and objectivistic-exterior approaches in general.” (The Eye of Spirit, 1997, 21) He argues for a comprehensive scientific approach that integrates intentional, behavioural, cultural, and social aspects of the human being.

(4) Transformation (versus transmission)

Transformation is one of the major aims for holistic education. It is often used in opposite to transmission.

In a pedagogical context the Dutch colleagues Wim Wardekker and Siebren Miedema (2001) use these terms to characterize two models of education. Foundational for the transmission concept is the existence of the ontological subject-object split. There is an objective world of meanings and facts that the developing pupils needs to master. The teacher is the mediator of the knowl-

edge that needs to be transferred to the pupils. It should enable them to take part in society. The model rests on a specific view of knowledge as representation. Those elements of culture that are more in the realm of emotions and affects tend to be excluded from the curriculum as such.

In the transformative view of education, the acquisition of knowledge and skills, and of norms and values as modes of being, knowing, feeling and acting is not taken in the dualistic subject-object way but in a holistic or transactional way. Learning is defined as the growing capacity or the growing competence of students to participate in culturally structured practice. The idea of dialogue and participation is fundamental. The core aspect of the learning process is not the transmission of knowledge, skills, values and norms but rather the transformation of these in to a heuristic base for acting.

III. Selected Educational Approaches

Paulo Freire – Critical Dialogue

Brazilian educator (1921 – 1997), 10th anniversary of his death on 2nd of May this year, well known all over the world, 27 honorary PhDs from universities all over the world. Freire served also for ten years as an advisor of the World Council of Churches education department. He is well known for his approach of alphabetization and his sharp analysis of mainstream pedagogy.

Some of his books became very popular all over the world: *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, *Education for Critical Consciousness* and later on: *Pedagogy of Hope* and *Pedagogy of the Heart*. It is important to mention that Paulo Freire's approach does not stand for a specific method. Freire was always critical against any uncritical adaptation of his approach in a different context. He has always encouraged educators that they look at themselves as a man or a woman living and producing in a specific society. He invites learners to come out of the apathy and the conformism akin to be 'dismissed from life', as they often find themselves. Freire challenges them to understand that they are themselves the makers of culture. This has led him to an approach to enable learners to decode their reality, to find out about the general issues in their context aiming at social transformation.

Freire's broad and deep understanding of education, taking its political nature at the core of its concerns, has been shaped by the following main principles:

1) *Dialogue*: One of his main principles of education. Dialogue is changing teachers and learners. Teachers become teacher-learners and learners become learner-teachers. Raising questions together becomes more important than to share ready-made answers.

2) *Praxis* (spiralling of action and reflection). Freire's approach has been developed through praxis, action and reflection about action that leads to a further development of action etc.

3) *Conscientization*. The development of consciousness is the central focus of Freire's pedagogy. The learner is seen as a subject with active meaning-making capacities and the capacity to re-name his/her context. This brings in a radical political dimension in education; Freire was committed to a pedagogy of liberation from inhuman living conditions.

4) *Lived experience* is more important than theoretical thinking

5) *Christian sources* have influenced his approach but also other approaches and philosophies like phenomenology, Marxism, and concepts of social anthropology.

One of the well known images Freire has used to characterize mainstream education is the *banking concept of education*. By 'banking concept' Freire means that the teacher puts deposits on an 'account' (the learner) with the hope that this will bear fruits. He is using this metaphor to characterize the dominant transmission mode of education and to develop an alternative approach to education that promotes transformation, liberation, and change.

Education for critical consciousness has been his main focus to encourage a reading of the world especially of those that are oppressed and under-privileged. Freire speaks of "teacher-learner and learner-teacher" to characterize a dialogue oriented method in education. Later he explored this as follows: "The teacher learns through teaching, the learner teaches through learning." In his latest books and articles Freire has published the books "Pedagogy of the Heart" and a "Pedagogy of Autonomy" that has been translated in the American version into "Pedagogy of Freedom" (Freire 1998). In these books Freire deals a lot with the situation of the teacher and their competences. Some of the features he argues for are:

Knowing how to listen

Openness to dialogue

Caring for the students.

In Germany we have just published two books with texts of Paulo Freire representing also the development of his pedagogy ranging the period from 1970 to 1997. The two titles we are: (1) *Oppression and Liberation* (1970–1989) and (2) *Education and Hope* (1989-1998). A third volume is on its way: *Pedagogy of Autonomy*, Freire's last book, the first edition in German language, in Brazil 750.000 copies. A central focus is on situation of the teacher.

Parker Palmer – Education as a spiritual journey

Parker J. Palmer works independently on issues in education, community, spirituality and social change and lives in Wisconsin, USA. He offers workshops, lectures and retreats, author of teacher formation programmes. Most of his

books deal with the inner life of teachers and how to create communities of learning.

Palmer starts his approach from the pain experienced by many educators. He highlights the 'pain of disconnection': Disconnection from colleagues, students and their hearts.

Parker J Palmer states that the world of education is filled with 'broken paradoxes':

- We separate head from heart. Result: minds that do not know how to feel and hearts that do not know how to think.
- We separate facts from feelings. Result: bloodless facts that make the world distant and remote and ignorant emotions that reduce truth to how one feels today.
- We separate theory from practice. Result: theories that have little to do with life and practice that is uniformed by understanding.
- We separate teaching from learning. Result: teachers who talk but do not listen and students who listen but do not talk.' (Palmer, 1998, 66)

If this is the situation we are dealing with as teachers, the task might then be: how do we develop paradoxical thinking? Paradoxical thinking means to embrace a view of the world in which opposites are joined, so we can see the world clearly and can see it whole.

An ongoing task might be: How do we overcome either-or thinking and create both-and thinking? How do we bring things together?

Holistic education works for a more integrated view:

One of his first books, first published in 1983, has the title: *To Know as We are Known. Education as a spiritual journey* (1993). His understanding of spirituality as a decisive element of teaching and learning is critical against a spirituality of ends which wants to dictate the desirable outcomes of education in the life of the student.

"It uses the spiritual tradition as a template against which the ideas, beliefs, and behaviours of the student are to be measured." (...) Authentic spirituality does not dictate where we must go, but trusts that any path walked with integrity will take us to a place of knowledge. Such a spirituality encourages us to welcome diversity and conflict, to tolerate ambiguity, and the embrace paradox." (1993, xi)

Palmer encourages us to look beyond modes of knowledge that are either inspired purely by curiosity or by a desire to control. He argues that another kind of knowledge is open to us, 'one that begins in a different passion and is drawn to other ends'. (1998:8). This knowledge originates in compassion or love. The goal from knowledge arising from love is the re-unification and re-

construction of broken selves and worlds. Palmer's guiding idea of teaching is to create a space where the '**community of truth**' is practiced.

For Parker Palmer teaching and learning require a community 'that can help renew and express 'the capacity for connectedness at the heart of authentic education.' (1998, 89

In his books he presents several models of *community in education* that give flesh to this image. Palmer states:

'The community of truth is an image of knowing that embraces both the great web of being on which all things depend and the fact that our knowing of those things is helped, not hindered, by our being enmeshed in that web.' (99)

Peter Senge – 5th discipline approach – learning organization

Peter Senge is Senior Lecturer at Massachusetts Institute for Technology MIT, founder of the Society for Organizational Learning; He has developed the *Fifth discipline approach* for learning in organizations and beyond, for practicing and aspiring managers and leaders. Senge's concern is to identify how interventions can be made to turn organizations into 'learning organizations'.

According to Peter Senge (1990: 3) *learning organizations* are:

"...organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together."

Organizations need to 'discover how to tap people's commitment and capacity to learn at *all* levels'

For Peter Senge, real learning gets to the heart of what it is to be human. We become able to re-create ourselves. This applies to both individuals and organizations. Thus, for a 'learning organization it is not enough to survive. "Survival learning" or what is more often termed "adaptive learning" is important – indeed it is necessary. But for a learning organization, "adaptive learning" must be joined by "generative learning", learning that enhances our capacity to create' (Senge 1990:14).

What does Senge say about possible change? He states: "People don't resist change. They resist being changed!"

The dimension that distinguishes learning from more traditional organizations is the mastery of certain basic disciplines or 'component technologies'. The five that Peter Senge identifies are said to be converging to innovate learning organizations. They are:

Systems thinking – the conceptual cornerstone of the learning organization; people learn to better understanding interdependency and change and thereby are able to deal more effectively with the forces that shape the consequences of their actions. We tend to focus on the parts rather than seeing the whole, and to fail to see organization as a dynamic process. Thus, Senge's argument runs, a better appreciation of systems will lead to more appropriate action.

Personal mastery -'Organizations learn only through individuals who learn. Individual learning does not guarantee organizational learning. But without it no organizational learning occurs' (Senge 1990:139). Personal mastery is the discipline of 'continually clarifying and deepening our personal vision, of focusing our energies, of developing patience, and of seeing reality objectively' (ibid.: 7). It goes beyond competence and skills, although it involves them. It goes beyond spiritual opening, although it involves spiritual growth (ibid.: 141). Mastery is seen as a special kind of proficiency. It is not about dominance, but rather about calling. Vision is vocation rather than simply just a good idea.

Mental models – This discipline of reflection refers to 'deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures and images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action' (Senge 1990:8). The repertoire we rely on. Awareness of attitudes and perceptions. Part of our task is to become self-reflective of these mental models, to expose our own thinking and making it open to the influence of others.

Building shared vision – this is decisive for any kind of organization, to hold a share picture of the future. Such a vision has the power to encourage experimentation and innovation.

Team learning – such learning is viewed as 'the process of aligning and developing the capacities of a team to create the results its members truly desire' (Senge 1990:236). It builds on personal mastery and shared vision- but these are not enough. People need to be able to act together.

These five disciplines provide a general scaffold for learning organizations that Senge and his collaborators have enriched by a number of methods, exercises and exchange of experiences how these can be used in different organizations, including schools.

Senge adds to this recognition that people are agents, able to act upon the structures and systems of which they are a part. All the disciplines are, in this way, 'concerned with a shift of mind from seeing parts to seeing wholes, from seeing people as helpless reactors to seeing them as active participants in

shaping their reality, from reacting to the present to creating the future' (Senge 1990: 69).

One of the resource books of the 5th discipline network has the title "Schools that learn". A Fieldbook for Educators, parents and everyone who cares about education (2000). This volume of 580 pages mainly uses the five disciplines I have introduced and works through examples how in the classroom, in schools and in community these principles were adapted in specific contexts.

On page 4 at the very beginning of the book you find the following quote:

"Children always need safe places to for learning. They will always need launching pads from which to follow their curiosity into the larger world. And they will always need places to make the transition from their childhood homes to the larger society of peers and adults." (4)

Schools that learn involve everyone in the system in expressing their aspirations, building their awareness, and developing their capabilities together. All schools, and their situations, are unique and require their own unique combination of theories, tools, and methods for learning.

Tobin Hart – Pedagogy of Depth

Tobin Hart, professor of psychology, University of West Georgia: (Hart 2007) Toward an Integrative Spiritual Pedagogy, one example out of many that tries to integrate a spiritual dimension into education. Hart argues for a *pedagogy of depth* and presents a map of different layers that can guide learning and teaching. He sees the transmission of information not as a goal of education but as a starting point for moving into the depth of this information rather than to move on to other information. "When we dive in a little deeper, subject and Self open and both have the potential to be transformed." (1149)

"In this map, *information* is given its rightful place as currency for the educational exchange. Information can then open up into *knowledge*, where direct experience often brings together the bits of information into patterned wholes involving mastery and skill. *Knowledge* then opens the possibility of cultivating *intelligence*, which can cut, shape, and create information and involves a dialectic of the intuitive and the analytic. This is followed by the layer of *understanding* that takes us beyond the power of intelligence to see through the eye of the heart. Understanding, then, contrasts and balances objectivism and offers a way of knowing that serves character and community. Education then has the possibility for cultivating *wisdom*, which sees from a greater height and blends insight into what is true with an ethic of what is right. Finally the depths lead to the possibility of creative *transformation* changing both the known and the knower and generating *new information* to be explored." (1151)

Hart is using a map to characterize a possible series of developmental changes that occur in a single thought, feeling or during a lesson. Each layer represents an expansion of knowing which in turn reveals more of the subject.

The Currency of Information. Education gathers around information but amidst a deluge of information what is the appropriate function of information for the educational endeavour and how should teachers and students hold and handle it?

Mastering the Puzzle of Knowledge. Having knowledge means holding together the puzzle of information. It implies the basic ability to use information.

The Power of Intelligence. Intelligence shapes and creates knowledge; intelligence uses knowledge, judgement overtakes mere opinion. The activity of intelligence is multifaceted and operates as dialectic of the intuitive and the analytic.

The Heart of Understanding. While conventional education is dominated by objectivism, understanding requires a fundamental shift in the process of knowing. Referring to Martin Buber who said that 'all real living is meeting' Hart states that understanding comes when we empathize with the other or understanding is learning to see through the eye of the heart.

The Eye of Wisdom. Wisdom is an activity rather than a static entity to be accumulated. Wisdom has been described as involving capacities for empathy, self-knowledge, listening, comfort with ambiguity, a tendency to de-automatize thought routines, and movement beyond conceptual limits. (1157)

The Paradox of Transformation. To transform means to go beyond current form. Transformation is both an outcome and a process; it is the push and the pulse that dives self-organization and self-transcendence.

As a conclusion, Hart states that spiritual education involves a curriculum of inner significances as well as one of outer information.

“When the heart of the discipline and our own hearts and minds are plumbed, information then serves its rightful place as a currency for learning, knowledge brings an economy of interaction, understanding opens the heart, wisdom balances heart and head leading us to insight and right action, and transformation culminates this deepening spiral as it enjoins us with the force of creation and communion.” (1161)

These three approaches from Paulo Freire, Parker Palmer and Peter Senge have a different context and are developed in different times. They share a critical perception of “knowledge” and they appreciate the active meaning-making capacity of all involved in a teaching-learning-process. They have also in com-

mon the believe that education is a valuable instrument for transformation, that it can make things better.

As a conclusion for teacher training of my presentation so far I offer you 5 points for further reflection:

VI. Perspectives for teacher training

- Recognize different modes of knowledge and appreciate them
- Science and religion as complementary
- Develop Self-reflectiveness, listen to the inner teacher
- Understanding and service as main features of teaching
- Appreciating the children and students and their active meaning-making capacity
- Striving for the better

My final remark is that any approach to education should reflect the situation and the right of the child for education, for religion and religious education.

I have brought with me a poem of Janusz Korczak, Polish doctor, poet and educator, director of a children's home who died with his children in the concentration camp of Treblinka in 1942 about Children's Rights:

*You have the right to be respected like an adult.
You have the right to be like you are
You do not have to disguise yourself and be like adults want you to be
You have the right of the present day,
each day of your life belongs to you, to nobody else.
You child, are not in the process to become a human being, you are a human being.*

And my last point is a quote of Martin Luther who said: "When you see a child, you have caught God red-handed."

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