

THE PSYCHO-PEDAGOGY OF SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE – CONCEPTS, INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES

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Abstract

Spiritual Intelligence (S.Q.) is the intelligence through which we have access to the most profound meanings and high motivations, which helps us to address and solve issues of values.

It is about solving analytical problems, calculations and scientific understanding of the functioning of the external world, but also about questions about the purpose and meaning of life.

The article proposes several meanings and values offered by the understanding of spiritual intelligence related to cognitive and emotional intelligence, but also an analysis of the synergies and differences between spiritual intelligence and spirituality.

We can also speak of connections of the socio-emotional intelligence with spiritual intelligence. Not in the least, there is the possibility of the building and development of spiritual intelligence levels.

Keywords: *Spiritual Intelligence (S.Q.); emotional intelligence (E.Q.); spirituality.*

1. Introduction

Our emotions and behaviours are determined by our thoughts: emotions are controlled and determined by cognitions, namely by our interpretation of the (internal or external) events that trigger these cognitions.

The theory proposed by Ellis is a bio-psycho-social one, as it includes a number of biological factors (predispositions with which we were born), psychological ones (cognitions: inherited or acquired) and social ones (thoughts, behaviours and emotions we already have or those that are interconnected with the world we live in).

Our beliefs play an essential part in determining how we feel or behave. If we have reasonable beliefs, the consequences will appear as moderate emotions, which help in achieving goals. On the other hand, if we have irrational beliefs, the consequences will be under the shape of dysfunctional emotions such as anger, anxiety or depression, which will prevent us from achieving our goals.

The difference between postmodern spirituality and the flexible, resilient one is made. The difference between the two spiritualities is based on a different emphasis of the two spiritual dimensions: postmodern spirituality focuses on the

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vertical dimension, and resilient spirituality highlights the horizontal dimension, of the relationship with other people.

Resilient spirituality as opposite to the modern one is multidimensional and includes the following elements:

- *the cognitive element*, comprising values or beliefs about existential questions, such as the meaning of life or nature of the world;
- *the metaphysical or transcendental element*, which refer to practising faith or personal religious experiences;
- *the relational element*, envisaging the relationship with God, with the others or even with nature.

In a personal sense, spiritual intelligence is positioned at the intersection between the two dimensions, that of the relation with divinity, the transcendent one and that of the relation with others, immanent and of sacrifice. It is necessary to be aware of what and who we are, but we manage this, in an authentic way, only in the mirror of the relation with the others and with the contexts we live in.

1.1. Spiritual intelligence, meanings, values, models and educational shaping

“The spirit experiences are the most important”, alongside with “mysticism of discussions about spirit or soul” (Gardner, 2006, p. 29).

If there are many aspects to support spiritual intelligence this is rejected on the grounds that, though people have the capacity to address existential cosmic aspects and to be concerned with transcendental truths, this is a capacity that depends ultimately on emotional characteristics and on the fact that we have no scientific means to investigate these issues properly. “An intelligence shouldn’t be mistaken for the phenomenological experience of an individual”, and “spirituality is inseparable of a faith in religion” or of belonging to a confession (Gardner, 2006, p. 29).

Spiritual intelligence (S.Q.), a concept proposed by Danah Zorah and Ian Marshall (1997, p. 78) was developed and accepted in mainstream literature, signifying the intelligence through which we have access to the deepest meanings and high motivations, that help us address and solve the problems about values. H. Gardner praised the concept as candidate intelligence.

Apparently, the contradiction between the thematic areas of the two terms of concept composition, seem to raise contradictions. The analytical problem solving, calculations and scientific understanding of the functioning of external world are processes often associated with the notion of intelligence in the contemporary vision. On the other hand, the concept of “spiritual” evokes images of sacred experiences, of personal and subjective reality, and questions about the meaning and purpose of life (Mihalache, 2011, p. 23).

However, it is possible to detect a fusion between spirituality and intelligence: Frances Vaughan (2002, p. 34) claimed that “spiritual intelligence opens the heart, enlightens the mind and inspires the soul, connecting the individual human psyche to the basic substrate of human being. Spiritual intelligence can be developed

through practice and can help a person to distinguish reality from illusion. It is expressed in any culture as love, wisdom and in serving the others”.

Spiritual intelligence is described, by comparison, in the following terms: “if in the case of cognitive intelligence, is about thinking, in emotional intelligence, is about feeling in the case of spiritual intelligence, *is about being*” (McMullen, 2003, p. 45).

The definition of this type of intelligence derives from its importance, usefulness and purpose: “spiritual intelligence does not only contribute to a person’s fulfillment, but also to the development of cultures and peoples. Any human being, in any community, has spiritual intelligence that doesn’t subscribe to a particular religious dogma (...), all human beings have within their genetic code the desire to accomplish something in life and spiritual needs such as: happiness, personal wellbeing and the appreciation of beauty and culture.

Within the context of spiritual crisis that presently affects us, the development of spiritual intelligence opens new and unsuspected horizons in our evolution itself as human beings” (Torralba, 2013, p. 23).

Spiritual intelligence is detached from religion by the fact that “it is the soul intelligence. It is the intelligence through which we can heal ourselves and be whole again” (Zohar, Marshall, 1997, p. 67).

Spiritual intelligence has acquired a “spiritual-existential” meaning, being underlined its “capacity to discern the objective reality with the help of methods of scientific knowledge (free of subjectivity, without the help of any supernatural subterfuges), to accept the limits of knowing the moment and to understand the cause of these limits, as well as to find values and meaning in a world within which not all situations have immediate and complete answer” (Zohar, Marshall, 1997, p. 68).

1.2. Synergies and differences between spiritual intelligence and spirituality

As we can infer a co-existence of socio-affective and spiritual intelligence, in the way that the latter derives from the former or the former is a premise for the latter, we can also appreciate the synergy and the individuality between the two realities from the knowledge field and the field of human personality: spiritual intelligence and spirituality.

Many authors make the difference between the concepts of spirituality and religion. Spirituality is individual and self-determined, while religion involves connections with a community, shared beliefs and rituals. Thus, spirituality may or may not include religion, it can find its expression in a religious context or remain outside it (Rusu, Turliuc, 2011, p. 34).

Because of his/her own spiritual intelligence, the human being is capable of asking questions about the meaning of life, has the strength to wonder what really lends value and significance his/her existence in the world, to separate itself from the surrounding world and also from his/her own self. Distancing is the condition of the possibility of singularity of own consciousness and of life success in a frame of freedom.

Spiritual intelligence develops a person's inner resources, the richness of self. It gives inner consciousness, it generates confidence, hope and a greater capacity to overcome life difficulties. It has as benefit the inner strength, which leads to increased psychological well-being and a good mental health (Torralba, 2013, p. 45).

S.Q. facilitates the dialogue between mind and body, between reason and feeling. While spirituality itself refers to searching and living the divine, S.Q. emphasizes the skills that comes out of this, thus, being distinguished from spiritual experience or religious belief. Therefore, Edward (2003) states that: "spiritual intelligence does not only mean the integration of a person's intelligence within the spirituality; on the contrary, it represents a combination of personality characteristics, of neurological processes, of cognitive capacity and of spiritual qualities. It allows us to live (our) life at a deeper level of meanings.

Other authors (Emmons, 1999) argue that spiritual intelligence is a frame for identifying and organizing the skills and abilities necessary to spirituality, identifying five components of S.Q.: the ability to use the spiritual resources for solving problems, capacity to enter into higher states of consciousness, to transcend the material and physical world, the capacity to invest daily events with a sacred meaning and the skill of being virtuous.

Spiritual intelligence is not necessarily related to religion. For some, spiritual intelligence can find itself a way of expression within formal religion, but religious faith doesn't guarantee a high S.Q. Many humanists and atheists have S.Q. high levels, while many active and obviously religious people have a very low S.Q. A series of studies by Gordon Allport show that there are many people who have lived spiritual experiences above the boundaries set by institutions belonging to main religious cults, rather than inside them (Zohar, Marshall, 1997, p. 67).

Test: calculate your spiritual quotient

"The twenty first century will be religious or it will not be at all", prophesied Malraux. The events tend to prove him right. All over the world, Moses, Jesus, Mohammed or Buddha have millions of followers.

Way of life (which prioritizes virtues), the art of feeling good with yourself and with the others, spiritual intelligence tends to be the solution to a better world.

What do you think about your own S.Q (Spiritual Quotient)?

Tick it every time you agree with the following statements:

You think that things can have soul.

You never go spontaneously to a place of worship (church, temple, synagogue, mosque).

You've never donated blood.

You are sure that The Apocalypse will take place one day.

You have the feeling that you are followed by bad luck.

To you, Christmas is just an occasion of giving presents.

You think that the human nature is basically good.

You think that people who talk to their plants are ridiculous.

You are sure that we are alone in the Universe, that there are no aliens.

You think that someone wants you now.
You'd never give charity to an alcoholic.
You are scared of cats.
You are sure that someone could verify the data in your computer.
You believe in the devil's existence.
You worry thinking about the future.
When you find a spider in your room, you will kill it.
You believe in fortune tellers' predictions.
When a seller is wrong when giving you the change, you don't say anything if it is in your favour.
You avoid walking under scaffolding.
You played your birthdate at Lottery.
You think that there is nothing else after death.
You are sure that science will prove God's existence some day.
You've never had the feeling of being in the presence of a supernatural phenomenon.
You don't believe in telepathy.
You are capable of leaving your husband/ wife and children to volunteer at the end of the world.
Your S.Q.: calculate how many times you've answered by "no" and multiply it by four: you'll get your spiritual quotient (out of 100).
(<http://www.bodymindspirit.ro/cabinet/test-calculeaza-ti-coeficientul-de-spiritualitate/>)

2. Connections of socio - emotional intelligence with spiritual intelligence

At the beginning of the twentieth century, I.Q. (Intelligence Quotient) has become a central issue. Our intellectual (rational) intelligence is what we use to solve logical or strategic problems.

Emotional intelligence – E.Q. (Emotional Quotient) – is as of paramount importance, it makes us aware of our own emotions and those of others, it makes us capable of empathy, sympathy, motivation and of having appropriate responses to the stimuli of pain or pleasure, is a basic requirement to use effectively the I.Q. If the brain areas involved in emotion are affected, thinking will be less effective.

The picture of human intelligence can be completed with a discussion about spiritual intelligence – S.Q., that intelligence which helps us address and resolve the issues of significance and values, which allows us to place our actions and lives in a broader and meaningful context, to assess why a path in life is more significant than another.

Ideally, the three types of intelligence work together and support each other. Our brains are made in such a way as to achieve this thing. But every type of intelligence – I.Q., E.Q. and S.Q. – has its own strength area and can function separately.

Spiritual intelligence represents the foundation necessary for the effective functioning of I.O. and E.Q. is the superior court of our intelligence (Zohar, Marshall, 2011, p. 34).

Spiritual intelligence differs from emotional intelligence, first, by its transformative power: they both offer creativity, but spiritual intelligence gives us the discrimination skill. It gives us moral sense, the ability to temper the rigidity of some rules by understanding and compassion, and an as high capacity to note the limits of understanding and compassion.

If emotional intelligence (E.Q.) was born as a result of empirical observations about people's different capacity to be successful inside organizations by using empathy and relations management – abilities that had nothing to do with cognitive intelligence (I.Q.), spiritual intelligence (S.Q.) appeared after differentiation between people's social success and their spiritual mission, in other words/i.e. after their capacity to learn the "lessons of life" and progress spiritually.

Not at all negligible in this direction, it is parallel development (through leveling the spiritual intelligence in group and at the organizational level) of The Learning Organization (Senge, 1990), an entire sub-domain devoted, in fact, to the spiritual development of the organizations. Personally/ at a personal level, spiritual intelligence is seen as a proof of personal/self-development.

Emotional intelligence allows to weigh the situation within which we are and behave appropriately.

"This means acting within the situation limits, to enable it to lead me" (Goleman, 2007, p. 47). But spiritual intelligence allows us to ask ourselves whether we wanted to be in that situation from the beginning. "This means acting on the limits of the given situation, enabling me to guide the situation" (Goleman, 2007, p. 49).

Socio-emotional intelligence enjoys a generous explanatory framework. As for the approach of spiritual intelligence, there is a juxtaposition. There are juxtaposed elements of dogmas and beliefs of the major religions of the world, from the multitude of religious movements or spiritual currents existing in the contemporary society and given physiological and neuroscience data, through language and eclectic schemata, which use a language and modern scientific and philosophical concepts.

From a theological perspective, one might say that such an approach of the spiritual intelligence domain is rather "a risky territory, which seems to indicate, without an adequate reading or without necessary precautions, an invitation to the privatization of the religious experience" (Mihalache, 2011, p. 24, our translation).

To better understand what spiritual intelligence refers to, Zorah and Marshall (Spiritually Intelligent Leadership, 2005), proposed a list with 12 qualities (table no. 1) which should be met by any person who is considered to have a high level S.Q., qualities also presented (as 9 characteristics) during a Conference in April, 2011, New Mexico. Frances Vaughan also offers an *interpersonal* approach (the authentic path through practice and spiritual life) to the concept of spiritual intelligence:

Table no.1. *S.Q. qualities*; Zohar, The Conference of Science and Consciousness in New Mexico, April 2, 2011

Zohar & Marshall	Science and Consciousness, Conference in New Mexico	Vaughan
Self-consciousness (knowledge of faith, values and personal motivations)	Capacity to face the pain, tragedy or suffering and to accept one's own mistakes and to learn from them	Intuition
Spontaneity	The ability of being holistic, perceptive and open to all, being able to seize the relations and connections between things	Openness to contemplative knowledge
The quality of being inspired by values	Self-awareness: knowing exactly who you are and (knowing) that you are connected to the whole universe	The capacity to see things from different perspectives, the refinement of the perceptions
Compassion	The ability to celebrate diversity: to be grateful that you are different from others	Freedom in thinking, reexamining the beliefs and conceptions about reality
Humility (understood by the authors as knowing one's own place in the world)	Humiliation	Spiritual search and practice
Integrating vision (about realizing all connections between different things or life aspects)	Spontaneity – the ability to answer the world properly, without moodiness or fear	Discernment
Tendency to put the question “why?” (understood as an expression of a need to understand things)	Courage	Holistic vision
Acceptance and appreciation of diversity	The ability to celebrate diversity: to be grateful that you are different from others	Respect for all the beings, differences acceptance
Context independence (the capacity to work against conventions)	Context independence – the courage to be independent and different, the courage to not adapt to conventions	Context independence (the capacity to work against conventions)
The ability of reinstatement (skill of being able to change the perspective about things)	The capacity to re-arrange in the frame, to integrate some thing or a certain situation, within a particular context	To serve the others unselfishly, kindness, generosity

The capacity to endure and give new meanings to the pain	The ability to let yourself be guided by visions, values or idealism	Compassion
Sense of vocation	Wisdom	Power to forgive
		Integrity
		Inner peace
		Growing authenticity and self-awareness
		Self-control
		Aesthetic sensibility and beauty appreciation

In terms of relationships with others, Daniel Goleman (2008, p. 56) described the relation between interpersonal emotions (those we share with others) and intrapersonal relations (those belonging to the self) in great detail, as E.Q. specific aspects.

But E.Q. doesn't bridge this gap between oneself and others. Spiritual intelligence helps us fill this gap between intra- and interpersonal spaces, by understanding the place that we (with everything we are) occupy in relation with the outside world. One can be visionary, spontaneously creative, flexible, high performance and in harmony with people and situations, without being necessarily a leader/manager. But these qualities, related to a high S.Q., provide an imperative base for nowadays leaders (Petrescu, 2013, <http://www.portalhr.ro/inteligenta-inimii>).

There are points of view that rank spiritual intelligence before socio-emotional intelligence: Bob Gottfried considered that "a high level of awareness and understanding of spiritual intelligence can facilitate and hasten the development of emotional intelligence" (Gottfried apud Roșca, 2007, p. 56).

As the statement that S.Q. is native, but cannot be improved, is controversial and questionable.

3. Using psychometrics in spiritual intelligence assessment

According to Danah Zorah (1997, p. 64), spiritual intelligence is the superior court of our intelligence: "Neither rational intelligence (I.Q.), or emotional intelligence (E.Q.) taken separately or all together, can't fully explain the complexity of human intelligence or the vast richness of the human soul or imagination. S.Q. gives us the discriminating capacity, moral sense, the ability to temper the rigidity of certain rules through understanding and compassion (...). We use S.Q. to fight with the questions about right or wrong and to glimpse the still unrealized possibilities".

Scientists certify the existence of a certain "Zone-God" into the brain. "Point-God" was examined by M. Persinger and V. S. Ramachandran (1997) being considered a spiritual centre incorporated into the brain. It appears that "God's point" is located in the neuronal connections in the temporal lobes. Within the research and tests, positronic emissions scans were conducted. Scientists found that the neuronal areas got lightened whenever the participants had spiritual or God-centered conversations. The brain too, not only heart, is sensitive to such values.

The neurological studies of M. Persinger (Laurentian University) at the beginning of the '90s and the research of the neurologist V. S. Ramachandran and of his team in 1997, regarding a "God's zone" in the human brain, showed an "innate spiritual centre within the neuronal connections of temporal lobes.

In topographic scans with positronic emissions, these neural areas appear enlightened whenever the subjects are exposed to conversations on spiritual or religious topics (God on the brain programme). (This may vary according to culture, Westerners reacting to God's mentioning, and the Buddhists and adepts of other religions to symbols that have significance to them)" (Zohar, Marshall, 1997, p. 89).

The studies of the Austrian neurologist W. Singer, in the '90's on the "integrity issue" show that there is a neural process in the brain, specialized in unifying and giving significance to one's own experiences – a neural process that effectively "bonds" our experiences together.

The research of Rodolfo Llinás and M. Steriade (2010) focused on consciousness forms during sleeping and wakefulness state and on the unification of cognitive events.

The neurologist and the biologist anthropologist Terrence Deacon (1997) showed that language is a specific human activity, mainly symbolic, centered upon meanings and which evolved simultaneously with the quick development of the frontal lobes. Spiritual intelligence is the one that sustains Deacon's research programme of the evolution of symbolic imagination and its role in cerebral and social evolution, in that it gives meaning in language use.

Spiritual intelligence and its scientific assessment have been the subject of some long debates. Some researchers consider that this concept cannot be assessed by traditional instruments, while others argue that, like most psychological constructs, measuring the S.Q. coefficient is possible.

Cindy Wigglesworth (2014) developed the first tool to assess the spiritual intelligence assessment instrument (SISA, Spiritual intelligence self-assessment), that measures 21 capacities and abilities by a questionnaire with a high validity level (S.Q. 21).

Based on Goleman's E.Q. model, Wigglesworth proposes four categories of behaviours associated to spiritual intelligence: self-consciousness, universe consciousness, self-control and spiritual presence, evaluating by 21 questions, the features specific for each category: compassion, wisdom, state of peace, the complexity of inner thoughts, self-consciousness, the transcendent experience, etc.

David B. King, Carl Mara and Teresa L. DeCicco (2012) developed an inventory with psychometric and statistical support, tested in two large Universities.

A person with a high S.Q. level is likely to be a leader of others: a person responsible with presenting the superior values and visions of others and with demonstrating how they are used, in other words (i.e.), a person that inspires the others.

4. Results: educability, training and the development of spiritual intelligence levels

The research confirmed the importance of meaning and of the sense of purpose. In terms of affection, fulfillment is always accompanied by a sense of satisfaction, in

terms of cognitive meaning, sense makes possible the interpretation of life experiences, and in terms of behavioural meaning there is motivation for behaving.

According to some authors, with age, people are more preoccupied with questions about the meaning of life and discover more meaning in life. Other authors claim that the concern with meaning is specific to adolescents.

Victor Frankl (2009, p. 76) states that “no less than 20 researchers have brought empirical proofs for the hypothesis that man is capable of finding a meaning in life, no matter the gender, age, I.Q., qualification, character structure or environment – remarkably – regardless of the fact of being religious or not, and whether is religious – regardless the denomination one belongs to”. The feeling of meaning is a problem about personality development, too.

V. Frankl points out to the fact that man becomes a person through freedom and responsibility. We can achieve life fulfillment or find meaning through four consecutive stages: perception, valuation, decision, commitment.

In the last years, though, universities in many world countries have studied the S.Q. paradigm, searching for explanations that are best sustained by experiments and practical applications.

At the Oxford University, S.Q. is central to strategic leadership programmes. The concept of spiritual intelligence (S.Q.) also seems to promise some important applications in health, education and personal development. There are proclaimed benefits that the concept of spiritual intelligence seems to engage in economics and business, some organizations, especially in the SUA, Great Britain, India and South Africa, using S.Q. to improve annual performance.

In the U.S.A a specialized institute, “The Institute of Spiritual Intelligence”, was founded aiming at the development of adequate research methodologies, at using recent scientific discoveries for a better grounding of the concept of spiritual intelligence (S.Q.) in areas such as education, health or other spheres of professional activity (Mihalache, 2011, p. 27).

In an article published by “*Sources of insight*”, Stephen Covey (2004, p. 89) suggests certain methods to develop our spiritual intelligence: reading a book or meditation, immersion in music and quality literature, finding a way to communicate with nature, keeping the loyalty towards the highest values, trying to contribute to a specific cause.

Being a concept based on the development of the whole human personality, this states that the value of our spiritual intelligence oscillates along life. To increase the S.Q. level is required, according to the authors D. Zohar and Marshall (1997, p. 29), to bring out the motivations that guide our actions and get us to act based on deeper and more authentic motivations.

Accordingly, Zohar proposes six ways to a higher spiritual intelligence: sense of duty, knowledge, nurturing love, personal transformation, brotherhood and serving the others. These involve fulfilling duties and accomplishing every aspect of our life as a sacred act, receptivity, nurturing and patience love, philosophical search of truth towards the deepest quest of God and all His ways till the final union with Him. “The progress to a higher S.Q. level leads us naturally from reflection, to

understanding and then towards wisdom (...). If by reflecting we get to realize that we ourselves, our behavior, our relationships, our lives and performances, could be improved, then we should want to change ourselves, to take the inner engagement, that we will change, in terms of energy and sacrifice” (Zohar, Marshall, 1997, p. 69).

Conclusion

For a system to fulfill its “purpose”, it must have an internal algorithm (internal dynamics) and a behaviour (interaction with the external environment) which draws a feedback (response) from the environment. We believe that man is a very complex system with an amazing capacity to learn and experience, who can evolve, not only naturally (genetically, physically, material), but also by free will (spiritual, mental).

Studying spiritual intelligence might be an important goal on the agenda of the interdisciplinary dialogue between theology and science, being able to have numerous practical domain applications, such as education or cultural acts.

Spiritual Intelligence has the role of a mediator between I.Q and E.Q. It is closer to social intelligence, understood as interpersonal relationship and correlates with E. Q. as an intrapersonal relationship.

We can speak of a psycho-pedagogy of the development of spiritual intelligence, via different interdisciplinary approaches: cognitive intelligence – spiritual intelligence, emotional intelligence – spiritual intelligence, social intelligence – spiritual intelligence.

Spiritual intelligence can be educated through other types of intelligences.

The development of spiritual intelligence can function as a didactic discipline, because it can be measured.

Therefore, we would speak of spiritual education understood as the development of spiritual intelligence.

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