

Expanding on a Bahá'í-inspired Pedagogy of Social Transformation

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Abstract

The authors, both collaborators with the Wilmette Institute, are learning what pedagogical principles can be gleaned from community-building and training processes in the global Bahá'í community and how to apply these principles in formal higher education. Worldviews are deceptively complex and impactful in learning processes. Therefore, the authors challenge dominant models shaped by materialism and partisan onto-epistemologies. Rejecting competency-based education, Wilmette Institute programs aim to build capacity for contributing to prevalent discourses informed by our approach to engaging with them through the Bahá'í-inspired evolving framework for collective learning. The Institute's curriculum design encourages faculty and students to adopt a learning posture through an environment that fosters a humble, searching heart, pure motive, and willingness to transform.

Résumé

Les auteurs, tous deux collaborateurs de l'institut Wilmette, étudient les principes pédagogiques qu'on peut tirer des processus de développement

communautaire et de formation au sein de la communauté mondiale bahá'íe, ainsi que la manière d'appliquer ces principes à l'enseignement supérieur formel. Les visions du monde sont d'une complexité trompeuse et influencent grandement les processus d'apprentissage. C'est pourquoi les auteurs remettent en question les modèles dominants façonnés par le matérialisme et les onto-épistémologies partisans. Rejetant l'éducation axée sur les compétences, les programmes de l'institut Wilmette visent à renforcer la capacité de contribuer aux discours dominants à la lumière de notre approche qui consiste à y participer en recourant au cadre évolutif d'apprentissage collectif inspiré de la foi bahá'íe. La conception du programme d'études de l'Institut incite les professeurs et les étudiants à adopter une attitude d'apprentissage dans un environnement qui encourage l'humilité, la soif de connaissances, la pureté d'intention et la volonté de transformation.

Resumen

Los autores, ambos colaboradores del Wilmette Institute, están aprendiendo qué principios pedagógicos se puede aprender de los procesos educativos y de construcción de comunidad en la comunidad mundial Baha'i y cómo aplicar estos principios en la educación superior formal. Los puntos de vista globales son engañosamente complejos e impactantes en los procesos de aprendizaje. Por lo tanto, los autores desafían los modelos dominantes formados por materialismo y onto-epistemología partidaria. Rechazando la educación basada en competencia, los programas de William Institute tienen el objetivo de construir capacidad para contribuir a los discursos prevalentes informados por nuestro abordaje de

involucramiento con ellos por medio del marco evolutivo de inspiración Baha'í para un aprendizaje colectivo. El diseño curricular del Instituto motiva que los docentes y alumnos adopten una postura de aprendizaje en un ambiente que fomenta un corazón humilde y buscador, motivo puro y deseo de transformarse.

A compelling, global drama is unfolding today in education. In 1996, the Universal House of Justice, the central governing body of the Bahá'í community, initiated a series of plans to build capacity in the worldwide Bahá'í community to rise as protagonists in building vibrant, outward-facing, diverse, and prosperous local communities.

The mission of the Bahá'ís is to learn to apply the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh in their individual and collective lives and in the life of their society. Through well-ordered efforts and in collaboration with many others who are dedicated to bettering the world, Bahá'ís bring the principles suited to humanity's age of maturity to bear on the conditions of the world's peoples. (Universal House of Justice, 1 November 2022 ¶4)

Three key elements center this global endeavor: a stream of letters from the Universal House of Justice with guidance addressing a coherent framework for learning about society-building processes; national and regional training institutes, employing materials developed by the Ruhi Institute, focused on helping the individual, community,

and institutions develop and act on a sense of moral purpose in a systematic capacity-building, grassroots endeavor aimed at supporting Bahá'ís and like-minded individuals in rising to serve their communities effectively; and an evolving institutional structure that guides and accompanies individuals and teams in a cyclical learning process involving study, consultation, action, and reflection.

Taken together, these elements comprise a remarkable example of a transformative constructive program. Indeed, the methodology used by the Universal House of Justice to educate and train the worldwide community of Bahá'ís and their friends to improve their communities is potentially illuminating for other educational endeavors. We have thus sought to glean pedagogical principles from the community building and training processes of the Bahá'í community and apply them in our professional work in formal institutions of higher learning. We believe that in this way, such institutions of learning can become spaces characterized by the “environment that is envisioned in the institute courses, an environment conducive to the spiritual empowerment of individuals, who will come to see themselves as active agents of their own learning, as protagonists of a constant effort to apply knowledge to effect individual and collective transformation” (Universal House of Justice, Ridván 2010 ¶11).

As educators learning to move through a liminal space of change, we are not immune to the push-and-pull

sequela of our journey. We see multiple oppressive forces, associated with the traditional Western notions of education that form the context of our own educational and professional trajectories, resisting the limitless possibilities for education that emerge through the recognition of the oneness of humanity. In our work at the Wilmette Institute,¹ we have been learning how to translate the vision of Bahá'u'lláh for humanity into reality through the framework for collective learning emerging throughout the Bahá'í world. Specifically, we strive to marshal elements of a Bahá'í-inspired pedagogy to raise the capacity in our faculty and students to contribute to prevalent public discourses in formal graduate-level educational settings.²

1 The Wilmette Institute is a Bahá'í-inspired institution of higher education that has provided community courses since 1996. It began offering an online graduate-level certificate program in Social Transformation in 2023.

2 The Universal House of Justice has identified three areas of endeavor in the current series of global plans: community building, social action, and contribution to public discourse. As Bahá'ís establish friendships through community-building efforts, they are drawn further into the life of society and learn to respond to a widening range of issues that face their locality through the three areas of endeavor. One of these responses is efforts to participate in and contribute to discourses about humanity's well-being and progress on various issues. Learning with and from others, insights are offered, informed by the Bahá'í teachings and experience, to influence public thought.

This paper aims to describe our nascent learning process around identifying and applying elements of the educational process implemented by the Universal House of Justice. Our intention is not to make a comprehensive list of these methodological elements. Instead, we reviewed letters written by the Universal House of Justice since 2010 to identify methodological elements most salient to our formal educational environment, which we have been learning to apply in our curriculum design and courses. After providing an overview of our framework for collective learning, we will explore the implications, and application, of the three most salient elements of the framework for our context: worldview apperception, learning as a mode of operation, and capacity-building in burgeoning transformative education, and specifically within the context of the course project of our certificate program.

AN EVOLVING FRAMEWORK FOR COLLECTIVE LEARNING

In social transformation movements, attention must be given to the dual transformation of the individual and the collective. Efforts to contribute to societal prosperity are reciprocal with the inner journey of the soul to develop and express spiritual qualities; each nourishes the other. The worldwide Bahá'í community thus places at the center of its mission a search for truth that is both individual and collective. Bahá'ís are learning that truth is neither

given in its entirety by God, requiring us only to follow it blindly, nor is it the province of a class (of clerics, the learned, etc.) to discern truth and give it to the masses. Bahá'ís believe that truth is one, and that any understanding of truth at a given time is relative and contextual, requiring a process to maintain unity of vision and purpose. This process is a search for truth that nourishes and is subsequently guided by an evolving framework for learning.

Some may perceive a framework for learning as a strategy or a prescription for action to achieve a goal. Far from “a narrow imposition of methods or formulaic procedures,” a framework, rather, “is intended to provide an evolving, shared understanding of beliefs, concepts, methods, practices, vision, and approaches relevant to advancing work in the particular arena of endeavor at hand” (Lample 15).

Some framework elements originate within the Bahá'í Revelation itself, and though our understanding of them evolves, they will remain foundational into the foreseeable future—such as the oneness of humanity and justice. Other elements can emerge and evolve through our learning processes, but can also be changed or dropped. Examples include organic growth and learning as a mode of operation.

The framework for collective learning continually evolves as the worldwide Bahá'í community gains insights into the development process. In the 2023 publication *For the Betterment of the World*, the Bahá'í International Development Organization (BIDO)

presented an overview of the framework to illustrate how Bahá'í social and economic development is carried out worldwide. BIDO identified seven elements that are further elaborated in the 2023 publication:

- Humanity's movement towards its collective maturity
- Oneness and justice
- Coherence between the spiritual and the material
- Universal participation
- Capacity building
- Organic growth
- Learning as a mode of operation (6–8)

Granting the indispensability of all the above elements in efforts made towards the betterment of the world, this paper focuses on two—capacity building and learning as a mode of operation—that have proven particularly salient in our own efforts to learn about an emerging pedagogy that draws on the experience of the Bahá'í community. Before turning to these, we will first consider worldview, an often implicit yet defining element of all learning processes.

WORLDVIEW

Bahá'u'lláh affirms that every human being is created noble and exhorts us to rise to the station for which we were created (Hidden Words, Arabic no. 22) by expressing the “capacity to know [God] and to love Him—a capacity that must needs be regarded as

the generating impulse and the primary purpose underlying the whole of creation” (*Gleanings* 27:2). The nobility of the human being is thus an inextricable part of the worldview that grounds the evolving framework for learning in the Bahá'í community. While we hold this nobility to be an ontological reality, its expression can be aided or hampered by both the individual's efforts and the broader social context that operates on the individual. As Shoghi Effendi points out, “[m]an is organic with the world. His inner life moulds the environment and is itself also deeply affected by it” (qtd. in *Social Action* 90). Competing forces of materialism and dogmatic expressions of spirituality have distorted humanity's self-identity, have become entrenched worldviews, and hampered our capacity to express our nobility. For our purposes in this paper, we briefly outline the hegemonic materialist worldview, contrast it with a worldview centered on human nobility, identify the relationship between worldviews and pedagogy, and determine how this relationship ultimately transforms our learning processes.

In attempting to understand the materialist worldview and its impact, it is helpful to turn to the Universal House of Justice:

Consider, when one looks about at the world and at the condition into which its peoples have fallen and the untold agony of human suffering, what could have caused such a lamentable state of affairs?

Is it not a fair assumption that the reigning materialist worldview, with its inordinate emphasis on individual liberty and its discounting of ordering norms and mores, is at least partly to blame? (1 August 1994 ¶4)

The concept of “discounting” highlights an important aspect of worldviews: they are not merely different lenses for an agreed upon set of phenomena. Our students often liken a worldview to a perspective, a different angle on the same reality; they invoke the story of a group of blind people, each of whom describes a distinct part of an elephant, with a clearer picture of the whole emerging as they share their perspectives. However, worldviews also dictate what phenomena are real to begin with. In other words, epistemology—how we know what we know is true—is often inseparable from ontology—the study of being and what exists in the world (De Leon).

At the core of modernity is an object-driven ontology (de la Cadena and Escobar), which we believe is driven by a materialist worldview. Through a materialist lens, then, the ontology of humans is reduced to the material plane. Spiritual reality is discounted or at minimum side-lined.

We do not always hold our worldviews explicitly. Each of our worldviews is shaped by myriad factors—home environment, culture, and life experiences. According to De Leon, worldviews are “often crafted from oral histories, origin stories, lived

experience, and socialisation . . . typically unconsciously adopted and taken for granted” (774). Faith communities also shape how many people engage with the world. Yet for many—likely most—of us living in the West, our worldview is also impacted by Western culture’s emphasis on our material nature. This inevitably distorts how we view human nature, since what we believe to be true about human nature is determined through our worldview. Worldviews become deeply entrenched mental lenses (Olsen), and can be likened to affective, cognitive, and empirical maps we use to make sense of the world around us (De Leon). While no two human beings will share identical worldviews, given the numerous social and individual factors that contribute to them, it is fair to say that many of us operate within worldviews to which the Western materialist outlook is a major contributor; we can thus speak of a broadly “reigning materialist worldview” (Universal House of Justice, 1 August 1994).

The forces that distort human nature and purpose towards materialism gradually become cultural. Materialist culture is perpetuated through many channels, and principal among them are our educational institutions. Modern Western education places an “inordinate emphasis on individual liberty” and discounts “ordering norms and mores.” For example, our academic institutions teach freedoms—expression, association, worship, privacy, etc.—as long as they are granted in ways that serve dominant economic, political,

and social dogmas. As an example, consider the reception of a grassroots movement like the Black Panthers in the United States. The Black Panthers were critical of the systemic institutional violence their community experienced and they developed legal protocols to protect the Black community from police brutality, along with educational opportunities to develop a greater pride in the onto-epistemological worldview of the Black community. These efforts challenged racialized hierarchies and the criteria of onto-epistemological expression academic institutions viewed as valid or in line with social dogmas. In essence, they contradicted the political and sociological worldview of the West largely ascribed to the United States, thus these grassroots movements were often vilified as violent and terrorist in nature, out of all proportion to their actual actions—particularly when compared to the violence perpetrated by groups or institutions that align with the dominant worldview, which is largely invisibilized. Without access to onto-epistemological viewpoints that can challenge the dominant materialist worldview in the West, people become pliable objects learning to normalize contradictions between ideals (e.g., democracy) and malicious actions (e.g., gerrymandering), between noble goals (e.g., law and order) and ignoble means (e.g., mass supervision and incarceration), thus justifying the contradictions as necessary for the common good.

A materialist worldview is hegemonic in nature, and impacts our

nobility by centering the non-spiritual, corporeal aspect of human nature. It also conditions the scope and quality of our happiness and relationships on material considerations. When we operate within the materialist worldview, we see problems as material at heart, and look for purely material solutions. The Universal House of Justice explains,

the expenditure of enormous energy and vast amounts of resources in an attempt to bend truth to conform to personal desire is now a feature of many contemporary societies. The result is a culture that distorts human nature and purpose, trapping human beings in pursuit of idle fancies and vain imaginings and turning them into pliable objects in the hands of the powerful. (19 April 2013 ¶5)

People are not hapless victims of the cultural tyranny described by the Universal House of Justice. If nobility is inherently human, then the agency to express it cannot be permanently lost; it can emerge (or re-emerge) through processes of transformation. Often, an encounter with a different worldview can catalyze such a transformation. In a recent course, one of our students, speaking of their own transformation, noted that to live in a just society, we need to accept the “Indigenous story” as real, and just as legitimate as the “story they grew up with.” If we accept various “stories” on their terms, they continued, we can learn from and collaborate with each other and grow

in unity. This acceptance implies more than a relativistic acknowledgment that other people may see the world differently than us; it means taking the ontological, epistemological, and axiological (value judgment) positions of their worldviews seriously, and being willing to consider whether they should influence, or even displace, elements of our own worldviews. Indeed, working to build an internally coherent worldview in this way—by learning to see previously marginalized worldviews on their own terms, and letting them illuminate truths hidden by the hegemonic worldview—is profoundly decolonial; it unravels patterns of oppression humanity has systematically experienced through centuries of colonialism.

While encounters with any worldview different to our own may catalyze transformation, the spiritual worldview that underpins the evolving framework for collective learning that is unfolding under the direction of the Universal House of Justice has a particular transformative power to displace the hegemonic materialist worldview. This transformative power is rooted in the Bahá'í writings that form the core of that framework; for, as Bahá'u'lláh states, “is not the object of every Revelation to effect a transformation in the whole character of mankind, a transformation that shall manifest itself, both outwardly and inwardly, that shall affect both its inner life and external conditions?” (Kitab-i-Íqán 240). The vision for a future society enshrined in the writings, and reflected in the framework

for learning, radically differs from our past and present, and calls on humanity to undergo a complete individual and collective regeneration. To aid in this regeneration, the spiritual principles that animate the framework enable us to critically examine materialism.

To further appreciate the scope of the change in worldview implied by our framework for learning, consider the transformative power of these principles when they are taken up by youth, as described by the Universal House of Justice:

The key to resolving these social ills rests in the hands of a youthful generation convinced of the nobility of human beings; eagerly seeking a deeper understanding of the true purpose of existence; able to distinguish between divine religion and mere superstition; clear in the view of science and religion as two independent yet complementary systems of knowledge that propel human progress; conscious of and drawn to the beauty and power of unity in diversity; secure in the knowledge that real glory is to be found in service to one's country and to the peoples of the world; and mindful that the acquisition of wealth is praiseworthy only insofar as it is attained through just means and expended for benevolent purposes, for the promotion of knowledge and toward the common good. Thus must our precious youth prepare

themselves to shoulder the tremendous responsibilities that await them. And thus will they prove immune to the atmosphere of greed that surrounds them and press forward unwavering in the pursuit of their exalted goals. (2 April 2010 ¶10)

Part of the value of this list of keys to resolving social ills is that it is not a simple repetition of the elements found in the framework for learning. Rather, we can see an elucidation of the mores, thought processes, attitudes, and actions implied in the framework, an important clue to the nature of the framework. The framework consists of broad truths about human nature and prosperity gleaned from two sources: Bahá'u'lláh's revelation and decades of experience applying the tenets of the revelation through grassroots community building and social action projects around the world. Each framework element is like the tip of an iceberg: its elucidation reveals abundant axioms and lessons. The framework works when people gain broad consensus on its elements, even though the circumstances of each person, community, or institution may elicit distinct perspectives. Unity in diversity is the watchword, even within the framework.

The framework thus invites us on a journey from our current condition characterized by the "untold agony of human suffering" to a future characterized by relationships analogous to the human body, in which "every cell, every organ, every nerve has its

part to play” making a “healthy, vigorous, radiant” body (Universal House of Justice, September 1964 ¶4). This journey is the human condition; it is the purpose of religion and the essence of life.

Moving from here to there is the task at hand for humanity. The more unaware we are of the extent to which materialism permeates our thought processes, actions, and relationships, the easier it is to accept a future that reflects the values of materialism. The more unaware we are of what is contained in our worldview, the more we impair our movement toward change by clinging to potentially outworn ways of being and understanding.

Much of the modern language of development used by civic organizations and the United Nations, for example, deeply resonates with Bahá'ís. Who can argue with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) no. 1 to “end poverty in all its forms everywhere”? Or with SDG no. 5 to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”? These are certainly noble and urgent goals. Nevertheless, lofty goals may be framed in ways that incorporate some of the underlying assumptions about human nature and development that created the conditions for poverty and misogyny in the first place, and the means used to advance these goals may also rely on means that perpetuate the root causes of the ills they seek to address. For example, in contrast to the framework's emphasis on the coherence between the material and spiritual

aspects of humanity and the world, the SDG goals assume that addressing material poverty and policies contributing to gender inequality will suffice to set humanity on a prosperous path. Carrying out the same analysis for other elements of the framework we see that the SDG goals are important, but partial; necessary but incomplete: they fail to address the spiritual aspect of human nature, or to set learning as a mode of operation at the center of their means of implementation, or, more importantly, to explicitly place the oneness of humanity and justice at their heart.

Of course, it would be possible for those working in development—or any other field—to adopt elements of the framework on an ad hoc basis without considering their implications for a coherent worldview. Indeed, a vague idea of human oneness, or of human dignity, is arguably implicit in the existence of the SDGs to begin with. The same is true in the field of education. Because many elements of our framework for collective learning are deceptively simple, and could even be viewed as a list of lofty ideals and precepts that are easy to agree to in principle, people may actively work to implement the framework while retaining core assumptions of a materialist worldview. But we have foregrounded the discussion of worldview because educators and students alike will suffer significant setbacks in understanding and appropriately applying the framework for learning if they remain steeped in a materialist worldview. Our

motivation to explore worldview as a key element in our pedagogical approach is that the framework can hardly be built in learners, or anybody else, upon a materialist worldview. Learning about the framework while living in a materialistic society naturally implies a transition period in which the tentacles of materialism gradually release their hold on the mind, allowing for a fuller understanding of the framework. The issue lies in actively gaining awareness of the effects of materialism and purging them from the mind to release the potential in the framework's elements.

For example, as delineated above, science and religion are "two independent yet complementary systems of knowledge that propel human progress." Yet, because of the excesses, brutality, divisiveness, manipulation, and all manner of heinous acts perpetrated in the name of organized religion over centuries, it is often challenging to promote the idea in educational spaces that religion is a system of knowledge that propels human progress. Framing religion as spirituality has gained widespread appeal precisely because it allows for an alternative to materialism without historical baggage. Nevertheless, spirituality, when used in this sense, connotes reflection on individual behavior without accountability—a far cry from religion, which, when conceived of in the way Bahá'u'lláh revealed, is a knowledge system with far-reaching implications for the structures of both the mind and society. The Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity explains the

relationship among science, religion, and development:

What development thought and practice needs today is to acknowledge and take advantage of the unifying, integrating and organizing functions of religion. It is these functions that make religion a system of knowledge and practice that parallels and complements the system of science. By using science and its methods—empirical observation, induction and deduction, falsification and experimentation—humanity explores and exerts influence over the phenomenal world. The methods of religion, both in its individual and collective dimension, which include the study of religious scriptures along with practices of prayer, reflection, and group deliberation, allow humanity to gain insights into the spiritual aspects of existence, insights that can be applied toward the betterment of the human condition. Rigid and dogmatic interpretations of religious traditions have led to superstition, blind imitation, and at times conflict, yet this should not lead to a wholesale rejection of religion. After all, science too has been abused and corrupted, yet few would argue that it should be abandoned. While science and religion are both susceptible to abuse, they are also both indispensable to human progress. (18)

A materialist worldview, no matter how many discrete elements of the framework it might explicitly or implicitly adopt, cannot ultimately accommodate the role for religion described in this passage; as such, any project rooted in such a worldview will be incomplete.

Another example of how a materialist mindset influences thought that we often encounter in our work as educators lies in a corollary—and historical sibling—of materialism: Western exceptionalism. This phenomenon is described by the Universal House of Justice: “Buttressed by its material and intellectual achievements and emboldened by a narrative of accomplishment and superiority that pervades its culture, the West puts itself forward in various ways as a model and measure for others” (19 April 2013 ¶3). Far from being confined to the realm of European or American conquests and militarism on the international stage, Western imperialism continues to frame race and class relations around the world, hegemonically confines knowledge to empirically gained information, and promotes perceptions of the environment and animals as inert resources to be “civilized” and exploited for profit. Even a brief list of the ubiquitous consequences of Western imperialism on society would render this essay unwieldy and divert us from our central theme. The most salient effect on our work is the challenge among educators and learners alike of appreciating and validating multiple ways of knowing. We could mention

Indigenous or Indian epistemologies that permeate our courses, but instead we will stay close to home: the elements of the framework for learning necessarily live in a space untouched by Western imperialism. We often ask ourselves what educational approach, course design, and pedagogy allow educators and learners to access and gradually take ownership of the framework’s elements outside of a Western lens.

Citing the ramifications of fundamentalism, which is itself arguably a species of materialism as well as a critical issue driving divisiveness and prejudice, the Universal House of Justice illustrates the manipulation people need to unmask and overcome to work within the framework for learning: “In its most extreme form, it [fundamentalism] conditions the resolution of the problems of the world upon the occurrence of events derived from illogical and superstitious notions. It professes to uphold virtue yet, in practice, perpetuates oppression and greed” (2 April 2010 ¶9). As an example, we see that the Conference of the Parties, “the supreme decision-making body” of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), fits this description. We see that peak carbon is still in the future (Le Quéré), even after thirty annual global conferences that condition planetary wellbeing on keeping average global temperatures below 1.5°C above pre-industrial averages. The 1.5°C goal is praiseworthy, but it fails to address the underlying “oppression and greed”

that brought about global warming in the first place. The 1.5°C target assumes that parties can work towards it without fundamentally changing the materialistic (extractive, profit-driven / capitalist, unlimited growth-oriented, natural world and animals as simply means and not ends, etc.) worldview that governs the economic life of their societies. Our courses explore this and other examples of fundamentalism, and the underlying “oppression and greed” that challenge how we read the conditions of our society and how we act to improve it.

As educators, then, we aspire to help students be self-reflexive about their worldview and gain immunity to the “atmosphere of greed that surrounds them” by creating a learning environment in which students eagerly seek a deeper understanding of human nature and the true purpose of existence through the course topic. To do this, we first ask ourselves a series of questions that emerge from the previously mentioned list of potentialities of youth. For example, how can students learn to distinguish between divine religion, spirituality, and mere superstition? What course design and pedagogy allow students to experience “science and religion as two independent yet complementary systems of knowledge that propel human progress”? How can students become conscious of and drawn to the beauty and power of unity in diversity? How can service to humanity define our educational experiences? How do we help students build genuine relationships through

meaningful and uplifting conversations with diverse people and organizations in their localities? What obstacles must be overcome for students to free their minds from prejudice and embrace a learning posture? What educational approach actively extirpates materialism from our minds, allowing us to embrace the framework for learning?

Worldview plays a central role in the capacity at the heart of our educational endeavor: contributing to prevalent public discourses. Effective contributions to prevalent public discourse begin by uncovering the underlying assumptions and worldview of the current discourse. Underlying assumptions are often implicit or hidden, requiring us to discover and name them. Beyond this, we must learn to articulate the actual or potential possible consequences of each assumption, as students may wonder why the underlying assumptions need to be challenged. If ours is a response “to some understanding of the nature and state of society, its challenges, the institutions operating in it, the forces influencing it, and the capacities of its peoples,” then our ability to read society with both our hearts and minds becomes paramount (Office of Social and Economic Development, 26 November 2012 ¶47):

A Bahá'í recognizes that one aspect of his spiritual and intellectual growth is to foster the development of his conscience in the light of divine Revelation—a Revelation which, in addition to providing a wealth of spiritual and

ethical principles, exhorts man “to free himself from idle fancy and imitation, discern with the eye of oneness His glorious handiwork, and look into all things with a searching eye”. This process of development, therefore, involves a clear-sighted examination of the conditions of the world with both heart and mind. (Universal House of Justice, 8 February 1998 ¶13)

Educators consider outcomes when they engage others in a learning experience. The educator’s worldview shapes assumptions about learning priorities, how students should go about learning, and what it should look like when a student achieves a course learning outcome. How learning outcomes can be liberated from materialism and adhere more closely to the elements of the framework for learning is a central concern for our pedagogy. A materialist worldview that is at least partially to blame for the “untold agony of human suffering” is surely the object of individual and collective transformation.

The process of discovering, exposing, and evolving our worldview and seeking answers to the above questions about learning environments that empower youth begins by exploring our outlook on learning itself.

A POSTURE OF LEARNING

A deeper understanding, by both teacher and student, of worldview and its relationship to pedagogy implies student and teacher reflection on how they will

undergo their transformative journey and what their learning process will look like. Posture, then, within the context of this paper, is the attitude with which we approach a topic, a course, and learning itself. When learning objectives are set from a perspective of material-spiritual harmony, the posture of learning students must adopt to fulfill those objectives requires them to pay attention to the attitudes and spiritual qualities that shape their thinking and interactions. Posture inevitably shapes the environment faculty seek to create among students, a key factor for the success of all engaged in a learning process.

Much will fall on those who serve as tutors . . . to provide . . . an environment conducive to the spiritual empowerment of individuals, who will come to see themselves as active agents of their own learning, as protagonists of a constant effort to apply knowledge to effect individual and collective transformation. (Universal House of Justice, Ridván 2010 ¶11)

Educators are like the tutors described above, shaping the educational environment and creating conditions for a transformative learning process. Service shapes the entire learning experience: those with more experience with a given topic or activity accompany others who rise to walk a path of learning with them. A key lesson learned in the educational approach the Bahá'í community uses is that because

the goal of a course is not limited to transmitting information, faculty and students become co-creators of new knowledge. When faculty members walk on the same path as the students, an environment of collective learning and community building is generated.

Essential to this environment is for faculty and students to bring into the learning space a humble, searching heart, a pure motive, and a willingness to be transformed. Looking within themselves as they work in learning spaces, they might ask how they can carry a humble learning posture. Faculty continuously seek pedagogical practices to help students recognize the level of purity of their motives. An example of such a practice is the field notes students keep to document, reflect on, and analyze fieldwork. The faculty are expected to provide constant feedback to students on the field note document, which encourages students to view the issue they are tackling through the framework, and as a process that is not solution-oriented. Student reflection on the framework and on their process is expected. A key to quality student reflection is a parallel process of faculty reflection on the course topic and resources; as in all aspects of education, faculty demonstrate that they are also on a path of maintaining a searching heart and a willingness to be transformed. Our course topics include some of the most vital and complex issues faced by society, and just as students are expected to gradually build their capacity to make meaningful contributions to public

discourse, faculty are expected to acknowledge the complexity of the social issues studied in our courses.

Another essential element of a posture of learning is for educators to consider the qualities that are required in students to collaborate among themselves. Faculty seek to create an environment where the knowledge within the collective surpasses the knowledge of the individual working alone; they take a collective view of the history of learning, seeing the emergence of learning around particular concepts, not through individual achievements but through a collective contribution to understanding; and they consider qualities like courage, reciprocity, and humility, along with thoughtful strategies that create an environment where the hesitant can be reassured.

Our perceptions of reality and each other are deeply impacted by the socially constructed narratives and patterns of a colonial world.³ Learning requires educators and students to be conscious of eschewing any trace of prejudice and paternalism. A deeply reflective process for the individual becomes necessary to create an opportunity for the cleansing of the heart in our methodology. Faculty members may regularly ask themselves who they are learning from and how they and students can widen their learning circles to broaden their perspectives and bring new understanding. A praxis

3 For an overview of postcolonialism, see Young; for its specific implications in education, see Andreotti.

incorporating continuous reflection on worldview and actions aims to enhance learning.

We will mention an additional element of the learning posture that has been influential in our thinking. Social action endeavors and operational processes of the Bahá'í Faith are themselves learning and capacity-building processes that operate through an evolving pedagogical model, elements of which are identified, systematized, and defined by the Universal House of Justice in their letters. Elements of such non-formal capacity-building processes that foster reciprocity, resilience, cooperation, and capacities that help new knowledge flow can be applied in formal higher education:

To strengthen the effectiveness of such efforts, the Bahá'í community has built systems of learning and capacity building into its operational processes. To give one concrete example, coordinators of various kinds provide support, assistance, and accompaniment to those engaged in particular types of endeavours, helping them to face challenges, think through problems, and recover from inevitable setbacks. Working at levels ranging from the national to the neighbourhood, they contribute to a global system of learning in which experiences around a particular line of action can be systematically collected from local communities, aggregated at the national or global level, and analysed

to identify significant trends and emerging patterns. Insights that arise from this process can then be disseminated back to the grassroots through these same channels, thereby informing future planning and action. (Bahá'í International Community ¶16)

Referring to the Rural University in Cauca, Colombia, Dr. Farzam Arbab describes an institutional “methodological perspective based on the establishment of learning processes” (12). An institutional learning posture implies that the learning cycle defines its identity, meaning a permanent and complex dialogue with grassroots, national, and international actors. We are inspired by Arbab’s definition of a university as a learning institution, a space where new knowledge is generated at the grassroots, systematized, and disseminated back to the grassroots.

CAPACITY-BUILDING

These reflections on worldviews and their relationship to pedagogical practices and the posture carried in learning spaces make it clear that capacity-building must take a central position in a burgeoning transformative educational environment. As an introduction to capacity-building, it may be insightful to briefly review the educational aspect of the most impactful discourse on global development. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal no. 4 (“Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote

lifelong learning opportunities for all.”) has three parts.

- Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education. This part identifies two essential characteristics of formal pre-primary, primary, and secondary education.
- Promote lifelong learning opportunities. The Incheon Declaration explains that this part points to “technical and vocational education and training and higher education and research,” which are elements of formal education. But it also mentions non-formal education: “In addition, the provision of flexible learning pathways, as well as the recognition, validation and accreditation of the knowledge, skills and competencies acquired through non-formal and informal education, is important” (¶10).
- For all. This part coincides with the element of the framework for learning—universal participation—that highlights that everyone needs education that empowers them to contribute to building a better society.

The most prevalent global discourse about education emphasizes formal education and generally discounts non-formal education (only one of the ten targets for Sustainable Development Goal no. 4 mentions non-formal education). Formal education happens in

institutions and involves certificates and diplomas as symbols of broadly recognized validity. Non-formal education involves curricula, instructors, and learning outcomes, but learners are not graded or awarded diplomas, and it happens outside the formal educational system.⁴

Formal education is more broadly available to and compulsory for the world’s children, youth, and adults than at any time in human history—a significant achievement. In tandem with transborder and national efforts and policies to offer education to all, the last four decades have seen an explosion of propitious attempts to improve instruction and learning by transcending traditional information transmission methods. Among the most influential developments are Pedagogy of the Oppressed, student-centered pedagogy associated with Constructivism, Hybrid Pedagogy, Fugitive Pedagogy, pedagogy associated with Land Education, pedagogy associated with Education for Sustainable Development, Place-Based education, Global Citizenship education, Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy, Open Pedagogy, and Asset-based pedagogy.

Yet in both breadth and depth—in who it reaches, and in its quality—formal education has far to go: “there are too many thoughtful analyses of the shortcomings of current educational

4 Non-formal education is distinct from informal education, which involves individual, unstructured, and self-directed opportunities to advance learning about topics of personal interest.

systems and processes for anyone to deny that the crisis of education has continued to deepen over the decades” (Farid-Arbab 61). For example, at the most basic level, many people still do not have access to education, and the COVID-19 pandemic deepened this problem. The consequences of formal education that is inadequate—whether because it is inept, oppressive, discriminatory, misguided, irrelevant, elitist, and/or materialist—reverberate for generations. Denying quality education to a population has always been one of the most potent strategies to maintain the status quo of inequality.

In response to the educational emergency and the adverse social and economic conditions it engenders, Sona Farid-Arbab, a Bahá'í educator, proclaims that “Educational processes must emerge, then, that enable a vast number of people to develop intellectual and spiritual powers, already present in potential to a degree far surpassing the achievements of past generations” (29).

To this end, through global plans, the Universal House of Justice places great importance on building capacity in people to contribute to advancing civilization:

It should be apparent to all that the process set in motion by the current series of global Plans seeks, in the approaches it takes and the methods it employs, to build capacity in every human group, with no regard for class or religious background, with no concern for

ethnicity or race, irrespective of gender or social status, to arise and contribute to the advancement of civilization. We pray that, as it steadily unfolds, its potential to disable every instrument devised by humanity over the long period of its childhood for one group to oppress another may be realized. (28 December 2010 ¶34)

Capacity is outward facing; it is conceptualized in terms of being able to *do* something meaningful and contributory in the world—“to arise and contribute to the advancement of civilization.” Yet the process of building capacity is one of inward development:

For the individual, building capacity implies developing a number of interrelated capabilities—scientific, artistic, technical, social, moral, and spiritual. Individuals must be endowed with an understanding of concepts, knowledge of facts, and mastery of methods, as well as the skills, attitudes, and qualities required to lead a productive life. (Bahá'í International Development Organization 11)

Developing capabilities is thus fundamental in a broader capacity-building scheme.

Non-formal education projects often emerge in response to weaknesses in formal education systems. The principal instrument the Bahá'í community uses to build capacity is the training institute, a non-formal educational

endeavor that functions in countless localities worldwide and offers education for children, junior youth, youth, and adults of all ages. The introduction to the first book of the training institute places capacity-building within a context that points to human nature and its source of joy:

From the outset, it should be clear to every participant that the courses of the Ruhi Institute trace a path of service to humanity, upon which we each walk at our own pace, assisting and being assisted by others. Treading this path implies the pursuit of a twofold moral purpose: to attend to one's own spiritual and intellectual growth and to contribute to the transformation of society. Progress on the path entails the development of a number of capabilities that require understanding and knowledge, spiritual qualities and praiseworthy attitudes, as well as a host of abilities and skills. (Ruhi Institute v)

To appreciate the nature of capacity-building within this educational paradigm, it is useful to contrast it with an overlapping yet distinct concept: competency-based education, which has gained momentum in the United States in high schools and universities for over four decades, as mentioned in the Incheon Declaration (UNESCO). Gervais defines competency-based education (CBE) as a “demonstration of the knowledge, attitudes, values,

skills, and behaviors required for the degree sought” (Gervais ¶6). Bridges defines competence as the ability to do something in a particular setting. Other definitions set life roles instead of degrees as the objective. CBE originated in Behaviorism (see below), and is now driven by specific performance outcomes.

Competencies and capabilities have several commonalities. Farid-Arbab defines the “concept of capability as ‘developed capacity to think and act in a particular sphere of activity and according to an explicit purpose’” (265)—remarkably similar to Bridges’ definition of competency. Further, competencies and capabilities share key elements: knowledge, attitudes, and skills. However, their differences are instructive. Perhaps the most visible difference is the “meritocratic benefit of competence-based models” (Ruitenbergh 125); CBE is, in effect a goal-oriented scheme useful for determining candidate suitability for training, promotion, or qualification. Building a capability, in contrast, is a training process, in our case in pursuit of fulfilling the twofold moral purpose. Competencies are primarily concerned with “measurement, assessment, and accreditation” (Hyland) of an aspirant, a competitor, a contender, or a nominee. Conversely, attending to “one’s own spiritual and intellectual growth” in a capability-based scheme implies self-awareness, internal reflection, and resolution, conditions that allow people to look outwards, rise up, and “contribute to the transformation of

society” at their own pace and to the extent and scope their current situation allows.

Two further distinctions between competency and capability-based schemes are central to our analysis. The first is the emphasis on behavior in competency-based education. Behaviorism in education emphasizes the role of external stimuli and consequences in shaping behavior or performance outcomes as key learning indicators. Teachers use repetitive stimuli to show students how they should react and respond. Behaviors are believed to be learned from the environment through positive reinforcement, reducing the influence of innate or inherited factors.

Capacity-building education conceived by the Bahá'í community is of course not unconcerned with student behavior. The individual aspect of the twofold moral purpose is a personal journey toward moral excellence that must be expressed in speech and conduct. Unexamined speech and behavior impede the fulfillment of the social aspect of the twofold moral purpose, as the two are mutually dependent. Nevertheless, capacity-building education does not seek predetermined performance outcomes or behaviors that allow those outcomes. Rather, understanding the learning process becomes paramount for students to gain ownership of their learning. Learning happens in cycles of action-reflection, individually and collectively, and cognizance of this process allows students to participate fully. In any situation,

students can decide which behaviors are most appropriate to fulfill their twofold moral purpose, what knowledge they will need for that purpose, which attitudes contribute to their goal, and which spiritual qualities will be needed. The goal is to gain the agency to think, act, and reflect.

The second distinction is that “values” in competency-based education are replaced with spiritual qualities in capacity-building education. As practiced by the Bahá'í community, capacity-building education distinguishes between values and spiritual qualities as an essential building block toward walking a path of service and assisting others along their path. Because the term “virtues” can sometimes be used in both competency-based education—as a stand-in for “values”—and in Bahá'í education—as a synonym of spiritual qualities—we might initially think that values and spiritual qualities are essentially the same. An approach that aims to develop values in students focuses on strengthening beliefs, ethics, or moral standards and their finite expressions through behavior. Developing a goodly character, then, happens by understanding a value and by receiving positive reinforcement to achieve certain behaviors related to that value. Examples include assertiveness, caring, cleanliness, confidence, consideration, courage, courtesy, and creativity.

All of these qualities would be recognized as virtues within an educational approach focused on spiritual qualities. However, such an approach

emphasizes the student's perception of the infinite dimension of certain virtues that, rather than describing outward expressions of beliefs, describe fundamental attributes of the human soul (Farid-Arbab 101). Unlike other types of virtues, each spiritual quality implies the others (118). For example, the Bahá'í writings declare that no other praiseworthy human attributes can be developed without truthfulness. A wrong or delusional person can be honest, but truthfulness implies a commitment to seeking the truth and living by it. The student's efforts to develop a goodly character should not be reduced to the resulting behavior changes, but should instead be conceived of as the development of spiritual qualities as permanent aspects of the student's soul. Some examples are love, generosity, compassion, forgiveness, humility, unity, and justice. Focusing on behavioral outcomes, then, will not allow adequate attention to be paid to the interactions among spiritual qualities in educational efforts (Farid-Arbab).

OUR COURSE PROJECT
AS AN EMERGING CASE STUDY IN
BUILDING SPIRITUAL QUALITIES

The desire of school and university administrators and accreditors to measure outcomes has led to the entrenchment of a competency-driven approach in formal education. Capacity building—in general, and specifically from a Bahá'í perspective—which is more process-oriented, is more common in non-formal education. The training

institute and the Preparation for Social Action, a Bahá'í-inspired education program “that equips young people with the necessary skills to become promoters of community well-being” (FUNDAEC), are both non-formal.

An observer might therefore ask why we take a capacity-building approach in our graduate-level, online, formal education programs. The simple answer is that capacity-building is coherent with the rest of the framework for learning, and it is more important to be internally coherent than to fit our approach into widely accepted but constricting competency-based models. But the observer might press the point: might formal education, with its requirements like accreditation, grades, certificates, diplomas, and learning outcomes, simply be less compatible with efforts to build capacities related to social transformation than non-formal education would be? It is to this question we now turn our attention.

Since early 2023, the Wilmette Institute has offered a graduate-level, online certificate program in Social Transformation to the general public, as well as individual courses in a partner university. The central capacity the Wilmette Institute aims to build in our courses is to contribute to prevalent public discourses from a Bahá'í perspective. All aspects of Wilmette Institute courses contribute to this overarching goal, but the course project plays a special role in this regard. In the course project, students identify an area of social change which they want to explore more deeply. Students

are expected to enter into iterative dialogue, over the course of three conversations, with individuals working (alone or on behalf of organizations) in the chosen area of social change in their locality. The conversations aim to produce two-way learning in which students listen, observe, inquire, and learn while prudently introducing concepts from the course resources into the conversations as potential avenues of exploration. Students keep a log where they plan for, document, and reflect on their conversations. Faculty provide periodic feedback in the log to support students, offer guidance, encourage reflection on the framework, and provide resources. Feedback emphasizes student attitudes and the spiritual qualities that allow students to interact on a spiritual level with their collaborators, take action, reflect, and learn. Students present their learning to the people they engaged with, and later to the class.

For example, one of our courses explores the issue of racial justice from a spiritual and material perspective. Each student is asked to have meaningful conversations with people in their community involved in the issue, read their local reality, and share key concepts from the course within a regular space for reflection. The project goals are based on working with community collaborators and drawing upon the concepts in the course materials to contribute to public discourse.

Mindful that any capacity consists of a number of components—“understanding and knowledge, spiritual

qualities and praiseworthy attitudes, as well as a host of abilities and skills” (Ruhi Institute v)—we designed this course project as a venue for students to acquire and develop all of these components of the specific capacity to contribute to discourse. Through the project, and supported by other aspects of the course such as video conferences and faculty feedback, students insert themselves into the prevalent discourse on the course topic, read the reality of the endeavor and community, and use their agency to contribute to the discourse from a Bahá'í perspective. The project focuses on building student capacity, not performance outcomes, behavior, or competencies.

The capacity to contribute to public discourse entails deep listening and critical discourse analysis to understand the subtleties, implications, and historical influences of speech. It requires a thoughtful review of the student's own worldview and its implications for social change; requires skills related to consultation, planning, research, and synthesizing information; requires knowledge of the field, the local community, and its challenges; requires a learning posture and the refinement of various spiritual qualities including humility, unity, and justice.

Faculty strive to cultivate an environment in which the oneness of humanity frames all relationships, allowing all to acknowledge the strengths each student brings to a collaborative project, and to cultivate the target capacities. Love among faculty and students allows them to establish bonds of

friendship and to overcome difficulties inherent in collaboration. Farid-Arbab reminds us, “Would it not, therefore, be more consistent to say that the exercise of one requires the presence of all other spiritual qualities?” (118). Developing multiple spiritual qualities coherently, each supporting the other, becomes an academic imperative. According to Farid-Arbab, “the capacity to manifest such powers as thought, comprehension, insight, reflection, and vision – as well as other powers of the human spirit like the power of unity, of humble service, of noble deeds, and of love mentioned earlier—must increase enormously” (29).

KNOWLEDGE

We have addressed spiritual qualities and praiseworthy attitudes, and specifically a posture of learning, as essential elements of capability-focused or capacity-building education. We will leave an exploration of skills and abilities for a more appropriate venue. The remaining element of capabilities—understanding, and knowledge—now deserves our attention to round out our exploration of using capacity-building in formal education.

Carrying out iterative conversations with people in the field demands that students plan, act, reflect, and study several times with the same people. This systematic, iterative approach is novel to many graduate students. Moving away from conducting interviews and embracing two-way conversations has proven challenging as

it bucks their previous undergraduate and graduate-level training and experience with fieldwork, research methodologies, and epistemology.

A capacity-building approach redefines the role of knowledge in courses. Although capacity-building and competency-based approaches share knowledge as a core component, we suggest that knowledge takes on a new definition and role in a capacity-building scheme. How education programs view the human mind and what they believe to be true about the whole human being determines curriculum development, methodology, assessment, the relationship between educators and students, and the nature and process of knowledge and understanding. The ways in which one views the mind and human nature are held within one's worldview, as discussed earlier in this paper. The western axio-onto-epistemological paradigm that was carried throughout the world through colonialism is materialist, capitalist, and hierarchical in nature (Quijano, 2000). According to Marañón Davis, “knowing where one stands in relation to colonialism can be helpful in identifying ways learning communities can unlock these traumatic patterns and systems established by a colonial past as they create new knowledge and systems of learning” (46). When the nature of educational systems is implicit, as it often is, they can institutionalize privilege that is associated with the ontological and epistemological constructs they use (Bang et al.). For these reasons, educational systems designed

through these colonial structures reify assumptions and Western ideologies. It is through this Western framework that information-based instruction and standardized testing can often cater to a view of the mind as a physical and independent brain that gathers and processes information like a computer. Patel connects such a view of the mind with colonial “projects of knowledge for the purposes of segmenting and the overriding ability to segment, to own the truth about the parts“ (19).

The mind is to the soul as radiation is to the sun, and it is “through the powers of the soul that the mind comprehends, imagines, and exerts influence, while the soul is a power that is free“ (Farid-Arbab 78). From this viewpoint on the nature of the mind,

Intelligence ceases to be defined merely as the capacity of the brain, but more broadly as the combined capacity of a number of interacting faculties of the human soul. Objectives of curricula are formulated so as to include the sharpening of these faculties, allowing the powers of the spirit to flow and bring harmony and prosperity to the life of the individual and of humanity. (Farid-Arbab 79)

A capacity-building approach moves away from simple knowledge transmission, which values knowledge for its own sake. Building capacity implies that students acquire only the knowledge they need to develop and apply the capabilities stated in the learning

outcomes—capabilities that aim to sharpen the faculties of the human soul. Gaining knowledge is a key element in capacity-building endeavors, but only as a means to contribute to an iterative action-reflection process which aims to generate and disseminate new, locally relevant knowledge:

What appears to be called for in any given region, microregion or cluster is the involvement of a growing number of people in a collective process of learning, one which is focused on the nature and dynamics of a path that conduces to the material and spiritual progress of their villages or neighbourhoods. Such a process would allow its participants to engage in the generation, application, and diffusion of knowledge, a most potent and indispensable force in the advancement of civilization. (Office of Social and Economic Development ¶24)

A pedagogy defined by capacity-building embraces students as spiritual-material human beings, their social and natural environments as spiritual-material spaces, and learning outcomes that express a holistic vision of prosperity. Engaging the human soul requires carefully selecting academic resources through which students gain insights into prevalent discourses and connect with people’s struggles and victories through investigative journalism, documentaries, articles, stories, and art pieces in which moving

narratives express hard-won truths. Fieldwork to apply new knowledge and reflect on action gives students opportunities to insert themselves in communities of practice and in local discussions of prevalent discourses. Exposing students to authors from underrepresented minority populations that speak eloquently to a spiritual perspective on human and social development helps students explore underlying assumptions, including their own, and root causes of individual and community issues, and connect to people's struggles to find and live in truth.

CONCLUSION

Formal institutions of learning have been developed primarily through a Western framework that has been heavily impacted by colonial forces, causing the dominant framework of learning in educational spaces to be limited to a material lens. We have explored the application of the Bahá'í-inspired framework for learning in a formal educational institution of higher learning, specifically having looked at three elements: worldview apperception, learning as a mode of operation, and capacity-building in a burgeoning transformative education.

An abundance of pedagogical models have been developed to innovate within spiritual worldviews, many by Indigenous scholars. For example, Simpson describes Nishnaabewin pedagogy, which is that of her Ojibwe tribe, as one in which “each individual must have the skills and knowledge

to ensure their own safety, survival and prosperity in both the physical and spiritual realm, their existence is ultimately dependent upon intimate relationships of reciprocity, humility, honesty and respect with all elements of creation, including plants and animals” (9).

Nevertheless, innovative pedagogies often respond to structures imposed by formal, materialist, colonial educational systems. Non-formal education seems to hold more promise for pedagogies free from such constraints. Through our programs, we work within formal education spaces but are pushing the bounds of how schools and universities currently function. The pedagogy has outgrown the institutional structures, and now the educational setting must rise to the occasion to fit the pedagogy. We aim to set forth an internally coherent pedagogical model regardless of existing institutional structures. Non-formal learning can stretch beyond its traditional confinements to respond to humanity's vital needs, and it is now time for formal educational spaces to follow suit. We are gaining increasing clarity about using elements of non-formal learning in formal learning environments—with their requirements of managing accreditation, grades, certificates, and expectations of partner universities—which we anticipate will be challenging.

A pedagogy can only be as effective as the limits imposed by the educational system (administration, curriculum, teachers, infrastructure) that houses it. Educational systems and their

pedagogies co-evolve symbiotically within the worldview that spawned them. Attempts to rebuild pedagogical models from the ground up require imagining truly innovative educational systems that may not resemble education as we know it today. A pedagogy of social transformation demands an entirely new conception of formal education. Until one emerges, we will forge ahead with our learning processes, open to the twists and turns such a path may take.

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