

Educating for Life: A Spiritual Vision for Every Teacher and Parent. (summary written by David A. Alexander PhD)

Thomas H. Groome points out that the most effective schools have a characteristic set of ideals—they value people, they are optimistic about people and society, they promote community and relationships, they help to develop spirituality, they emphasize issues of justice and peace, they respect diversity, and they teach critical thinking. For Groome these values arise out of the “depth structures” or “core convictions” of Christianity and they are embedded deeply in the “ethos and style” (the total culture) of the school. He calls these implicit values a “humanizing curriculum.” By “humanizing curriculum” he means, “That learners might become fully alive human beings who help to create a society that serves the common good.” Groome identifies these implicit ideals in the following eight categories.

1.) *An Operative Anthropology*: For Groome education is primarily a relational encounter—an I/Thou relationship between everyone in the school. Educators should respect and value students as persons and they should cooperate with the learner as question raiser, coach, companion, and friend. Groome defines “educator malpractice” as allowing students to “settle for less than who they can become.”

2.) *“Seeing God in All Things” (Phrase by Ignatius)*: Groome argues that schools should encourage a sacramental consciousness. By this he means an outlook on life that sees each new

day as a gift and seeks to become fully alive and make the most out of life.

3.) *An Operative Sociology*: Thomas H. Groome reminds us that a full human life is lived in community with other humans. Christian social values include a civic consciousness, honesty, loyalty, integrity, peace, fairness, justice, compassion for the poor, and "opposition to all forms of social oppression and discrimination to become agents of social transformation." Education should proceed in ways that foster cooperation and partnership among learners-this helps to socialize them for "right relationship" in every context of life. Every educator and learner has to be respectful, be open to others and their ideas, encourage reflection, listen actively without dominating or controlling, and testing conclusions.

4.) *The Great Conversation*: "Tradition is like a great conversation that has been going on across the generations of humankind-since the beginning of history. For educators not to teach it to rising generations would be to leave them out of the conversation and so to live less humanly."

5.) *An Operative Epistemology*: Enlightenment rationality turned out to be violent, divisive, elitist, blind to social contexts, self-interested, unethical, oppressive, and destructive. Our highest value is to think for ourselves, to probe our own thinking, to question our own assumptions and interests, and to uncover the social and political context on our knowledge.

6.) *A Spirituality for Everyone:* "Christian spirituality calls to a vibrant and vital lifestyle-to embrace, enjoy, and celebrate life and to be life-giving for others." "As educators teach in ways that develops learners' gifts and human potential, inspiring them to be fully alive human beings with a sense of joy in life, learners engage and nurture their spirituality."

7.) *A Faith That Does Justice:* Justice demands participation in struggles to transform socio-cultural arrangements that cause people to be hungry or homeless, oppressed or victimized. Christians have the mandate to be partners in God's shalom by living a faith that does justice for peace; unqualified commitment to the dignity and sacredness of every person; working for the common good; honesty in one's personal dealings with neighbors and groups; actively helping to create social structures that distribute fairly society's resources and promote the rights and responsibilities of all; bringing to every level and arena of life a deep commitment to the full liberation of humankind with special favor for those most in need.

8.) *A Universal Openness: Into All the World:* One danger for all religions and religious communities is sectarianism-"a bigoted and intolerant exaltation of one's own group that absolutizes the true and the good in its members, encouraging prejudice against anyone who has alternative identity-especially immediate neighbors." The other danger is parochialism-"a narrow-minded, self-sufficient,

and insular mentality that closes up within itself, is intolerant to or oblivious of other perspectives, and conceited about its own." "Our deepest desire is to transcend sectarianism and parochialism and live instead with authentic love of self and other and in solidarity with all people."