

Unification Thought Principles of Education in the Coronavirus Era

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Across America, governors, administrators, teachers and parents are sending their children back to school.

A big problem is that the science around preventing the spread of coronavirus is almost completely opposed to the way schools have been designed and run for the last 150 years. When viewed from an epidemiological perspective, “social distancing” and “centralized schools” are almost complete opposites.

This is a perfect time to use the disruption of the Internet and the pandemic to rethink education, from its purpose and desired outcomes to effective use of the new technologies that are quickly becoming universally available. Unification Thought provides a useful framework that can refocus universal education on the skills, abilities and heart necessary for citizens of the 21st century.

The Research Institute for the Integration of World Thought has a great section on the Principles of Education. Several educational philosophies are reviewed and contrasted to Unification Thought.



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The ultimate goal of Unification educators is to co-create with the student a person of character and love, a good individual, parent and citizen, and a natural genius. This large and visionary purpose of education is what sets the Unification approach apart from most education policy today.

Education of Heart: Unificationism assumes that human beings have an original nature of love that has to be intentionally and freely cultivated by the parents and the child. This is considered the fundamental goal and foundation of the educational process.

Education of Norm: This is where the student learns how others act and why, and practices the form of relationship that is culturally appropriate. In the best application, children follow role models and learn how to communicate love at many levels.

Education of Dominion: In this, the student learns to relate to the world and manage the resources around him/her. This area includes intellectual discipline, the scientific method and skills required to grow, use, develop, and form the material world.

The Current Public Education System

In the American system of public education, the education of dominion is the top priority, teaching intellectual and practical skills to allow the student to become a successful worker.

A secondary goal in public schools is to indoctrinate the student with social skills and opinions that are acceptable to the administration but are significantly different than the values taught by Unificationists.

In the shallowest usage, children are indoctrinated to dogma, inherit destructive and pathological behaviors, or are left to grow wild with no behavioral guidelines or expectations. Often children’s training is focused on politically correct behaviors rather than learning how to generate authentic understanding and concern for others. The Red Guard in Mao’s China and Hitler Youth reflected organizations that created a strong Education of Norm but were corrupted by a small worldview.

Public schools are forbidden to discuss God, religion or religious values in any way that promotes spiritual values. In many colleges, education of the heart is suppressed in favor of materialistic explanations of psychology and sociology.

In America, the family and church were originally meant to teach spiritual and cultural values and the school was meant to focus on practical skills. With the breakdown of the family, the erosion of religion in public life and the rise of materialistic explanations of life, the role of family has diminished, and teachers, psychologists and sociologists have assumed parental roles for many children.

Shifting education to achieve the ideals of Unification Thought primarily requires a change in focus and for families to reassert their role in defining the Education of Heart and Norm.

Technical, scientific and intellectual education currently dominate the goals of modern education, resulting in lopsided students who are smart and well-schooled in exploiting the material world, but often lacking manners and empathy. Many of the great technology advances of the 20th and 21st centuries have come out of American research universities using this system.

A second, less desirable outcome is students who have a diminished appreciation of spiritual and humanitarian values. Students educated primarily for dominion take on a neo-pagan hue, favoring intellectual complexity and material outcomes ahead of human dignity.

Restructuring Educational Delivery

Educational outcomes are normally designed by identifying learning objectives for every class and building them into the curriculum. Adjusting these objectives is the quickest way to reform the system to create more rounded students.

In Bloom's Taxonomy, there are three main learning domains: the affective, cognitive and psychomotor. These correspond to heart/emotion, intellect and will in Unification Thought. Each learning objective is assigned a set of verbs that describe what the student will be able to accomplish upon completion of the learning.

To refocus education in a more constructive direction, Unificationist educators need to complete learning objectives that support Unificationist values in their many subject areas.

The American education delivery system is designed around the agricultural calendar, organized like a factory and has a pedagogy that is authoritarian, characterized by an expert giving lectures. Centralized schools are very efficient from an industrial point of view: buses move the children to a large complex where they can be efficiently managed and cost per student kept to a minimum. Students stand in lines and sit in rows with a "boss" that controls their movement, time and tasks.

The educational conveyor belt operates with timed bells, so all classes start and stop at the same time and a herd of children can be trained to move with a minimum of supervision. It is no coincidence that large factories work in exactly this same way with bells and whistles controlling the work day and a hierarchy of managers to control the behavior of the workforce.

This educational model was developed to supply workers to the factories of the Industrial Revolution and like our appendix, seems to be something we needed in an earlier life, but isn't a good fit for the modern situation.

Rather than obedient, technically-trained drones, the modern workplace requires workers who are continuous learners, who collaborate well with others, and who bring value through being a part of creative solutions rather than just time servers.

Many teachers have been experimenting within the current school system to produce working and learning systems that create the more modern outcomes required, but the inertia of the larger system has slowed innovation.

It is likely that in this country learning achievement will be delayed across all ages of students for at least one year due to COVID-19 and many students will never catch up with the levels they could have been expected to reach. The current pandemic gives an opportunity to try new and innovative delivery systems to overcome this gap.

Flipping the Classroom

For centuries knowledge used to be the domain of the scholar. A trained individual would acquire, master and could transmit complicated ideas to eager students. Rich people could hire one of these well-educated tutors for their children.

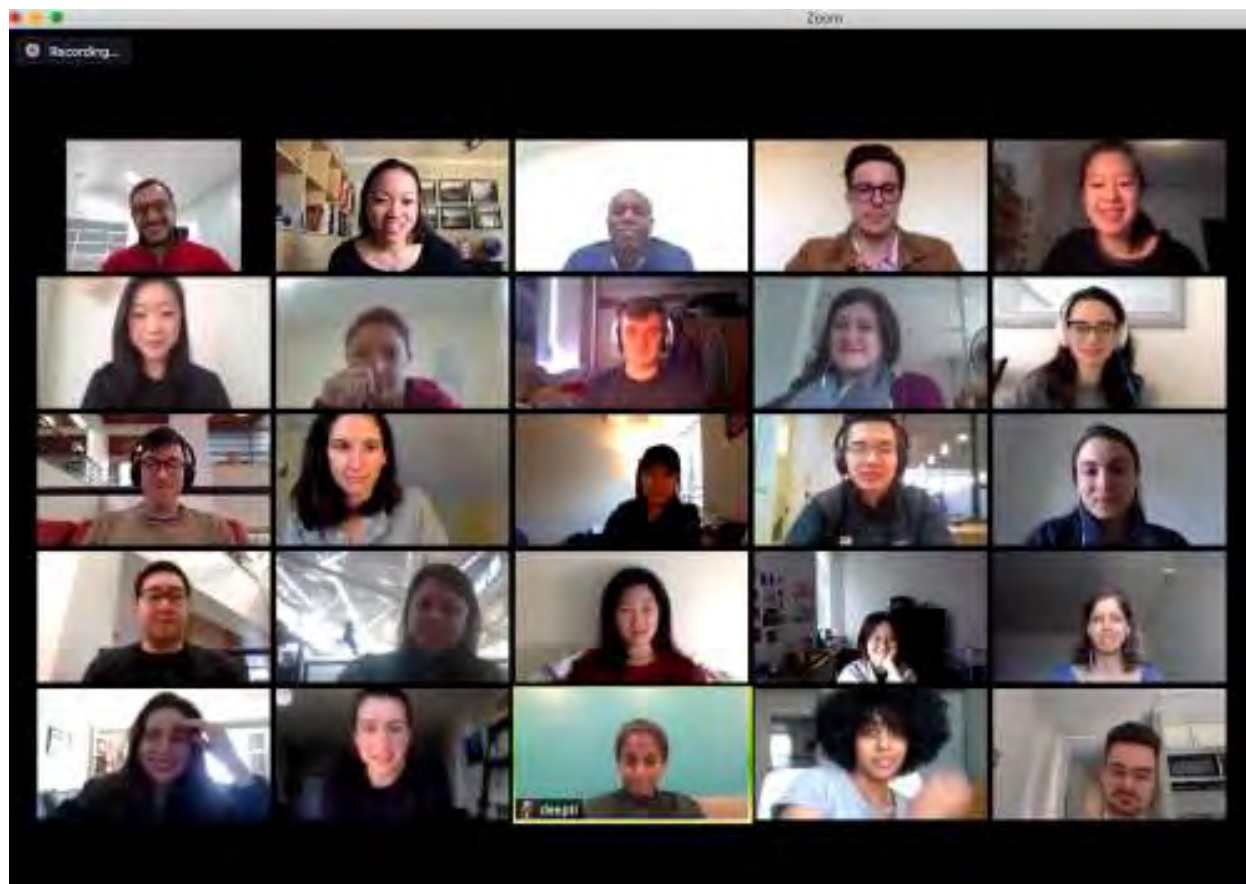
With the Industrial Revolution, there was a need for large numbers of workers to be educated. It makes perfect sense to gather a lot of students in one place, hire the best teachers available and fill each classroom to get efficient use of the available scholars.

The Internet has turned that equation upside down. Most students can get faster and better access to obscure knowledge on their phone or computer than in their classroom.

There are current assets for education that have been largely untapped by the traditional model of

education. The Khan Academy, Ted Talks and YouTube contain timely, nuanced and interesting content and explanations of every subject. There is no teacher in the world that can present with the knowledge and quality currently available at the click of a button.

This has created the possibility of “Flipped Classroom Education.” In this model, the content of education is curated by the teacher and consumed by the student as homework. Each type of content can have multiple explanations and examples that the student can pursue, so that the learning style of the student can match the available delivery.



Time with the teacher is spent in application and extension of the concepts covered in the online presentation through reflection, questions and answers, and dialogue.

This type of learning is best practiced in small groups of students rather than massive crowds of impersonal learning. In fact a “one-room schoolhouse” is more effective with this type of learning than a large central school.

In the face of the challenges of restarting large schools in high risk environments, many families are gathering in “pods” to hire a teacher/tutor to teach children in family school. Three or four families with 10 or 12 kids of different ages are a relatively safe gathering, but can access world class education under the guidance of a professional teacher, rather than a harried parent trying to work from home at the same time.

There are excellent benefits to this type of schooling from a Unificationist point of view. The multi-age classroom allows for filial development and the transmission of good examples of behavior from elder to younger and requires elder children to assume a level of responsibility that develops their character.

The opportunity to select a tutor that embodies not just the unionized certification required of teachers, but the heart and behavior that inspires children is another benefit. This is where the value of a Unificationist approach can most clearly be realized.

In addition to the safety benefit of small schools, they can now be economical as well. New York State spends between \$8,000 to \$12,000 per student per year. A one-room schoolhouse can now compete with large institutions without losing access to the top minds and content that make large institutions attractive.

There are many creative responses emerging that can help break down the monolithic nature of public schools. In Minnesota, young teaching assistants are being hired to monitor the classroom and manage behavior, while older teachers login online to teach and control the learning content.

In New York City, day care centers are experimenting with corporate schools, where the students accompany their parents to work and the kids spend the day in vacant offices with other employees' children. Each child is doing the online program of their school, but the corporation hires a

teacher/monitor to assist and manage the students. At the end of the day, the students go home with their parents.

A third interesting model is the home tutor. Rather than pay for daycare, parents who work from home are opting for a tutor to come two or three hours a day to take over the educational needs of the child and give the parent a chance to do their own work.

All of these models can provide an education for children. The need is for parents and educators to “think outside the box” and to use technology to supplement the required learning.

An approach to education that educates the spirit, mind and body, not just for technical or social skills, will create students who are refreshingly integrated, ask important questions and don’t run away from difficult answers. Education is a field where it takes 20 years to see what the result of a particular effort yields. It is safe to say that our current system is training students for success in the 1980s, but is not well-suited for the global, technical, interconnected world of the 21st century.

The power of the Unificationist approach comes not from the amount of knowledge or depth of analysis, but from the integration of the parts of the whole. There is a business maxim that “A” students almost always end up working for “C” students. The narrowly intellectual “A” student doesn’t have the scope or impact of a well-balanced person who has invested their heart and skills as well as mastered technical systems. The coronavirus impact has opened a door to creating the kind of harmonized education that is not possible in a more traditional environment. It is an opportunity to disrupt a large institution for the better.

Unificationists can seize this time to be part of the conversation on education and at the same time reorient education toward a model that rewards the development of heart as a first priority and achieves efficient and effective 21st century education.

John Redmond is married to a clever wife, is the proud father of four interesting children, and is one of the Tri-Pastors of the Mid-Hudson Family Church. He has high expectations for the American Unification movement.