

# TOWARDS A SPIRITUALITY OF OPEN DISTANCE LEARNING

**F. J. Potgieter**

Unit for Education and Human Rights in Diversity  
North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus  
Potchefstroom, South Africa  
e-mail: Ferdinand.Potgieter@nwu.ac.za

## ABSTRACT

This article suggests attention to the *paideia* of the soul as an educative corrective for preparing open distance learning students for living in the current technology-dependent world. This world is undergirded by a technology-rich knowledge society that privileges new informational epistemologies. In an attempt to suggest a spirituality of open distance learning that is based on the *paideia* (full-blown completeness) of the soul, use is made of the integrated interpretations of three relevant viewpoints. It is shown that spirituality in open distance learning is neither religion nor ethics; that it is essentially about the meaning in and of life, meaning-making and meaning-decoding, self-transcendence (especially as meaning-making), connection, engagement and a re-interrogation of all the major existentialist questions. It is a journey towards wholeness and compassion (as knowledge of love) of every student teacher.

**Keywords:** spirituality, spirit, *techné*, *paideia*, open distance learning, teaching, training

## 1. THE MAIN PURPOSE OF OPEN DISTANCE LEARNING OVERLOOKED

The relentless pursuit of distinctions, decorations, accolades and awards, and the increased need for output and product (in terms of grades and graduates) has been allowed to hijack nearly the entire school day in most countries in both the developed and developing world (Cowen 2013). The South African schooling system, in particular, fails to provide a solid basis of education for many of our open distance learning students

(hereafter ODL), making the above-mentioned chase after status and peer-recognition to look more and more like quasi-pedagogical window-dressing (Morrow 2005, 2). This facade is perhaps best captured by the following quote from Jansen (2012): ‘Why should we tolerate this? ... We allow children to pass with ridiculous results and [then] lie to them when we say to them that these sub-standard marks can get them into a job or into post-school training.’

The general literacy/numeracy levels of the majority of open distance student teachers in South Africa (cf. Zimmerman, Botha, Howie and Long 2007; Bloch 2009; John 2013) need to be dramatically improved, while at the same time, we are trying to prepare them for the teaching profession. Our best efforts to ensure the development of a deeper understanding of the subject content that needs to be taught, seem to deliver ever fewer dividends. Due to historical circumstances – including levels of poverty, a lack of mobility and the lack of a reading-culture – many South African teaching students also remain trapped in parochial conceptions of the world and what it has to offer (cf. Morrow 2005, 1, 2).

## 2. THE CRISIS

The current crisis in the South African education system (Jansen 2012; John 2013) is, essentially, twofold. At least part of this crisis can be ascribed to the fact that the practice of education, *per se*, is being dominated increasingly by the neo-liberal agenda, namely, by the characteristics of the political-economical-social context of the global cosmopolis of the early 21st century, of which some of the major symptoms include managerialism, performativity and competitiveness.

Part of the crisis in South African education can, perhaps, also be ascribed to the ‘crisis of the human spirit’ (Goosen 2012, 707–718). Goosen argues that there are essentially two semantic values of spirituality, namely *pneuma*, *spiritus* or breath-of-life, and *nous* or rational mind. These two values are respectively embodied and expressed by the two overarching preconditions to the important location that was associated with the spiritual in Western culture in the past, namely, Jerusalem and Athens. Both 19th and 20th century philosophers such as Feuerbach, Marx, Freud, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida and others have indicated Jerusalem as the locus, mainly, of Judeo-Christian religion, and Athens as locus, mainly, of the classical metaphysical traditions (Goosen 2012, 710).

According to the critical verdict of deconstruction as philosophical approach, the ‘spirit’ was inscribed in (and, therefore, inextricably part of) the old, traditional world with its hierarchies and hence also (per definition, according to the deconstructionists) its oppressive preference for things like the spiritual (compared to the corporeal/physical), the rational (compared to the irrational), the aristocratic (compared to the democratic), extant potentiality (compared to materialised/fulfilled actuality) (Goosen 2012, 711), and so on. The result of all of this was the demise of religious and metaphysical

traditions in the modern world. Rampant historicism has destroyed the precondition(s) of the spiritual, leaving – in this particular case – teacher education ‘spiritless’, as it were. Put differently, it led to the progressive demise of the *paideia*<sup>1</sup> (Gr. Παιδεία, i.e. the full-bodied completeness) of the soul of the teaching student and, hence, of his or her learners later in the schools where they already are or will be teaching.

As explained below, the progressive demise of the *paideia* of the soul of the majority of our teaching students, finds expression in the fact that the critical intellectual component of their training has been devalued for the primacy of being technically skilled in the art of teaching (Robinson 2001, 103). Few research studies have grappled with this issue. Even fewer try to argue that the primary goal of teacher education programmes is to produce critical and moral ‘pedagogues’ rather than knowledgeable and skilled ‘teachers’. The work of at least four renowned educationists (Koerner 1963; Abbs 1995; Robinson 2001; Morrow 2005) suggests that the emphasis appears to be more on the acquisition of knowledge, the cultivation of teaching skills and, in some instances, perhaps also the (demonstrated) development of ‘intellectual character’, and less on the cultivation of dispositions, the development of moral/ethical character and of Kazamias’s idea (2013) of the ‘*paideia* of the soul’.

This state of affairs was first emphasised in the seminal work of James Koerner (1963, 128, 132, 256), where he argued that American teaching students were being ‘mis-educated’ at the time, because too much emphasis was placed on ‘pedagogy’ in the sense of instructing them in how to teach while their knowledge of academic subject matter was arguably not enough. He pleaded for an all-graduate body of future teachers whose common knowledge base would be ‘the foundations’ of education.

Nearly eighteen years ago, Abbs (1995, 393) bemoaned the education system’s denial of spiritual energy, of intellectual enquiry, of aesthetic beauty and public virtue. In a better world, he averred, education would serve, ‘willingly and lovingly ... the transcendent ends’ of culture and society. Abbs (1995, 4–6) rejected any model of classroom-based education where teachers are unquestioning skill-based technicians who employ ‘managerial’ language:

We see an emerging generation of teachers who know little of the past and virtually nothing of philosophy, who have an essentially uncritical view of what they do and a managerial language which dims intellectual perception. Teachers become the technicians of subjects, not the critical guardians of a long culture ... teachers emerge as an unexpected proletariat in the new technology. They will do the labour but will be told what and how to do it. They become the serving functionaries, not of the life of culture and the intellect, but of either the state or the free market – or a combination of both.

In 2001, Robinson (2001, 103) picked up on Abbs’s theme when she referred to ‘... the disempowerment of teachers that ... have been reduced to the level of high-level technicians’ as a result of the kind of teacher training that they were subjected to at the time. According to her, the nature and content of teacher education programmes (at least in South Africa) clearly showed that there ‘... has been a proletarianisation of teachers’

work, where critical intellectual work on the part of teachers has been devalued for the primacy of practical considerations ...’.

In 2005, ten years after the publication of Abbs’s work, and 42 years after the first publication of Koerner’s book, Morrow’s (2005, 1) analysis indicates that the same problems that flawed the American teacher education system in the 1960’s now prevail in South Africa:

Professional education always faces a dilemma about how to reconcile two necessary dimensions, constantly in tension with each other, of such education. One of these is the intellectual development of the student; the other is the development of the capacity for skilled performance in the situated contexts of practice. These two dimensions of professional education correspond to two forms of discipline that do not harmonise neatly with each other ... In the case of Teacher Education there is a century long series of attempts to solve or duck this dilemma. Two ways of ducking the dilemma are either (a) to valorise the intellectual development of the student (we see this in the case of traditions that see the possession of a University degree as the only qualification needed for teaching<sup>2</sup>), or (b) to valorise ‘practical’ training, and to think of Teacher Education as a kind of hands-on apprenticeship.

Reference to the work of the four scholars mentioned so far should not be construed as implying that, insofar as the question about the goal of teacher education is concerned, there are no cases where the goal has not been seen as the development of the ideologically rather radical ‘critical reflective practitioner’ or the ‘transformative intellectual’ (cf. the oeuvres of Henry Giroux and Paulo Freire; also see Coetzee 2013 and Van Deventer 2013, 197). As is demonstrated in the penultimate paragraph before the conclusion below, there are at least two recent exceptions to the criticism raised by Koerner, Abbs, Robinson and Morrow. Both Japan and Namibia seem to have heeded Abbs’s plea (1995, 193) ‘... to reaffirm that education should be primarily concerned with critical reflection, with personal development and with the sustained enquiry into the various forms of meaning’.

In view of the above, two critical questions should be asked: *What should the goal of teacher education be? Should it be to produce critical and moral pedagogues (respectively, educators) or to produce technocrat teachers?* And, of course, *why?* These questions lead to two sub-questions, firstly: Should teaching students be ‘educated’ so that they may be recognised, upon graduation, for possessing esoteric knowledge, such as the ‘philosophical foundations of education’, or should they, instead, be ‘trained’ so that they will mostly be able to demonstrate instrumental competences and concomitant skills? And secondly: Should teaching students be ‘educated’ so that they may be recognised for understanding the social and historical location of education and also for understanding education as a reformatory movement, or should the *techné* of their ‘training’ outweigh attempts to cater, at least curricularly, for the *paideia* of their souls and hence of the souls of all those learners who are already or will be populating their classes?

The purpose of this article is to suggest answers to this problem. To reach this aim, the remainder of the article consists of a conceptual and theoretical investigation, to examine possible answers to the stated problem.

### 3. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 3.1. The divide between (a) *techné* and (b) *Algemeine Bildung/culture generale* and *paideia* of the soul

It seems that technicalism and managerialism might at least partially be blamed on the characteristics of the political-economical-social context of our early 21<sup>st</sup> century global cosmopolis. The fact is that ODL is, by definition, undergirded by the notion of a technology-rich knowledge society that privileges new informational epistemologies characterised by incessant global processes of non-linear change (cf. Bauman 2000, 6; 2007, 1), globalisation, neo-liberalism, possessive individualism,<sup>3</sup> new forms of non-linear individualism<sup>4</sup> (Joubert 2013, 115), the change in subject position from ‘homo economicus’<sup>5</sup> to ‘manipulatable man’<sup>6</sup> (Olssen 1996, 340), competitiveness, managerialism, performativity (Coetzee 2013), and what is known as the Beckian ‘Risk Society’ (Beck 1992, 1999, 2007).

Teaching students are living in an era of ‘liquid modernity’, where what were previously solid bonds of collective identity keep flowing into less determined, more vicarious forms of individually conducted life policies (Bauman 2000, 6). They are living in and through social structures that limit their individual choices. Societal institutions (e.g. churches and schools) that guard repetition of routines and patterns of acceptable behaviour can no longer (and are not expected to) keep their shape for long, because they ‘... decompose and melt faster than the time it takes to cast them, and once they are cast for them to set’ (Baumann 2007, 1). All societal institutions tend, by their very nature and composition, to make for even more complexity (Joubert 2013, 117). For this reason, it is easy to understand how a focus on materialism and pragmatism might run the risk of losing sight of intellectual enquiry, aesthetic beauty, values and public virtue.

Distance education and the e-learning technologies that drive it sometimes allow for knowledge to become a commodity, for training to triumph over education, and for vocational and social skills to prevail over general liberal education (*Algemeine Bildung, culture generale*) (Kazamias 2013). The emphasis on instrumental competences (theoretical, practical and cognitive) and the current era of high stakes accountability in school education not only undervalue aesthetic and ethical dispositions and civic virtues; they also create a spiritual crisis (Marshall 2009, 38–39). In short: a teaching corps where instrumental skills and increasing accountability with regard to such skills are seen as more important than critical development, may marginalise the importance of the ‘*paideia* of the soul’ (Kazamias 2013).

Scholars agree that ‘teaching’, *per se*, is a highly complex undertaking, the complexity of which is compounded by the diversity of aims, purposes and contradictions that one finds in our society and among its citizenry. It remains a complex human act whereby one person (the ‘teach-er’/ ‘lectur-er’) intentionally engages, within a specific context, in a guided interaction with another person (‘learn-er’/ ‘student’) lacking certain knowledge, skills or any other form of content in such a way that the latter is able to perform relevant learning tasks that will in turn, enable him / her to acquire the knowledge, skills or content so as to realise the intention. Teaching is ‘effective’ to the extent that it enables the learner to perform the relevant learning tasks. On the other hand, an educator’s first and foremost concern remains ‘education’ (and this is usually the point where scholars start disagreeing with each other). The etymology of the word ‘education’, derived from the Latinate *educare*, means ‘to lead forth,’ suggesting that teachers can (and should) be healers who lead their learners to a wholeness of spirit (Glazer 1999, 35). In general, ‘education’ also refers to instances where the educator seeks to instil within the learner the correct and commonly acceptable social norms, values and attitudes.

A spirituality of ODL might arguably contain the key to unlocking the door that leads to the *paideia* of the soul. In the rest of this article, what is believed to be our ‘relationally agreed understanding of spirituality’, as Wessels and Müller (2013, 2) call the current consensus among scholars, and how it might relate to ODL praxis, is expounded. The exposition takes the form of a delineation of the term ‘spirituality’, which covers various facets of spirituality as a phenomenon<sup>7</sup> and in which it will also be related to ODL praxis.

## 4. TOWARDS A SPIRITUALITY OF ODL PRAXIS

### 4.1. Conceptual background

Like teaching, spirituality is also a complex, multidimensional concept (George, Larson, Koenig and McCullough 2000; Moberg 2002; Cook 2004; Hill 2005) that defies clear-cut boundaries. In ancient times, ‘Jerusalem’ and ‘Athens’ not only showed an unqualified and openly public preference for the spiritual above the material; the spiritual and the material were also intertwined and mutually dependent (Goosen 2012, 707). This is no longer the case. Spirituality, in the present day and age, has been forced to retreat. It has finally taken up recourse inside the innermost spaces of the private ‘self’ (Goosen 2012, 714). On one hand, spirituality finds its theological prevalence in the theology of the pious, believing, faithful and private heart. On the other, it finds its philosophical currency in the increasing emphasis on the individual’s freedom of choice. Both Theology and Philosophy support the premise that all matters spiritual are only to be located inside the intrinsic life of the private self (Goosen 2012, 714).

It is, therefore, almost impossible to find a contemporary description of spirituality with which the majority of people would agree. A number of studies show, for example, that the differences in the responses of people who were asked to define spirituality outweighed by far the similarities (Zinnbauer, Pargament and Scott 1999). The word 'spirit' originates from *spirare*, which means 'to breathe,' and has evolved to connote the essential principle of something or somebody (Online Etymology Dictionary 2013). One's spirit is the foundation of his or her emotions and character; so the spirit of ODL must also be quite human. It is the deepest part or core of every teacher and learner (Kubow 2011, 156). According to Kourie (2006, 23), it refers to the deepest dimension of the teacher and learner, the ultimate values that give meaning to their lives irrespective of whether they are religious or non-religious.

Despite spirituality's enforced retreat to the innermost spaces of the private self, it is neither a touchy-feely, nor an ephemeral construct without relation to what happens every day in schools and without relevance to today's climate of accountability. It has been described as, among other things, the way in which teachers and learners 'understand and live their lives in view of their ultimate meaning and value' (cf. Muldoon and King 1995, 336), as 'a subjective experience of the sacred' (cf. Vaughan 1991, 105), and as 'a quality that goes beyond religious affiliation, that strives for inspirations, reverence, awe, meaning and purpose, even in those who do not believe in any good' (De Jager Meezenbroek, Garssen, Van den Berg, Van Dierendonck, Visser and Schaufeli 2012, 338). Nolan (2006, xviii) maintains that spirituality concerns itself with everyday life experiences and practices, while Marshall (2009, 40), for example, suggests that spirituality is located at the very core of who teachers are and of what sustains their everyday work with the learners in their classes.

The research on spirituality in teaching (in particular) has been fairly recent and is not without disagreement (Marshall 2009, 27). A common objectivist (belief in the validity of objective observation over subjective experience) suspicion of spirituality, for example, is that any way of knowing that requires subjective involvement between the knower and the known is regarded as primitive, unreliable, and even dangerous (Jones 2005, 2). However, even things that cannot be measured can nevertheless be experienced (Jones 2005, 2), and over the past decade or so, educators and educationists have managed to establish a credible body of scholarship about the spirit and deeper meaning of teaching and learning (of which ODL forms part) (Marshall 2009, 27).

Despite conceptual and epistemological difficulties surrounding the definition of spirituality as mentioned above, it is now largely accepted among educationists as being one of the co-constituents of the meta-message of teaching and learning (cf. Jones 2005, 1). Most notable among these educationists are Palmer (1983; 1993; 1998; 1998–1999; 2001), who has emphasised the inner life of teachers, Marshall (2009), who first advocated the inclusion of the spirituality of teaching and learning in teacher education curricula, and Noddings (1993; 1995), who has emphasised the care and ethics of teaching. Educationists also seem to agree that the purpose of educating the

human spirit is twofold. Firstly, education of the human spirit leads to the formation of persons with integrity, which in some circles is referred to as the whole person or the organic individual (cf. Van der Walt and Potgieter 2011, *passim*). Secondly, education of the human spirit is commonly agreed to be a prerequisite for creative thinking, which can be seen as a condition for living in the modern globalised (the ‘global village’) and cosmopolitan world (characterised by diversity, among other things). The relationships within a teacher’s and his or her learners’ inter-personal engagement, when they reflect on the large questions of life can, therefore, develop a synergy that, in favourable conditions, will animate the learning process. This synergy, it can be argued, also reveals the spiritual qualities of teaching students in ODL programmes, provided that it is not confused with either religion or ethics.

## 4.2. Not religion or ethics

If religion is understood as a public institution that facilitates access to a power, Power or a force greater than ourselves, then spirituality cannot be a religion; and if ethics can be understood as the study of rightness and wrongness in human conduct, then spirituality is not ethics either (Jones 2005, 3). Religion represents the institutional; spirituality represents the personal. Religion is what we do together with others; spirituality is what we do within ourselves. Religion is head; spirituality is heart (Jones 2005, 3). Spirituality is also not doctrine. Instead, it is the vital energy that creates meaning in our lives (Jones 2005, 3). Religions are particular answers (i.e. ‘positivisations’ of ‘faith’ as onticity) to the universal human questions about the creation and meaning of life, while spirituality refers to the universal personal concern for these questions (Jones 2005, 3) and how such personal concern relates to our universal search for meaning in life, as explained in the next paragraph.

## 4.3. Meaning in and of life

Frankl (2004, 115) posits that meaning in life is to be found in what he calls ‘the self-transcendence of human existence’ – a discourse that is not only associated with human beings’ search for meaning, but also with spirituality, as the work of Harris and Purrone (2003) shows. They specifically argue that ‘meaning of life’ is an essential feature of the onticity of spirituality. Seifert (2002, 61) claims that spirituality has recently become very prominent in studies on meaning-making and meaning-decoding. She relates this to what she calls ‘the internal struggles in the search for meaning’ (cf. also Wessels and Müller 2013, 2). In education, in particular, spirituality seems to refer, *inter alia*, to this Franklian self-transcendence and Seifertian meaning-making and meaning-decoding compassion in the classroom, which acknowledges the interconnectedness of the students, the teacher and the subject (Jones 2005, 7). It raises consciousness, stimulates awareness, fosters creativity and imagination, connects us with grander issues

of purpose and meaning, and facilitates connection with that which inspires us (Jones 2005, 7). Essentially, spirituality may best be understood in terms of at least four of its prominent qualities (facets), namely (a) transcendence, (b) connection, (c) wholeness and (d) compassion (Jones 2005, 3–7). These are now discussed briefly.

#### 4.4. Self-transcendence as meaning-making

Spirituality is transcendence as *epektasis* (Gr); it is about moving beyond our own psychological walls to experience more clearly the true nature of things. It is a straining forward towards mystery, toward a luminous darkness, towards an insatiate desire for a meaning beyond meaning (Jones 2005, 3). In this regard, Wessels and Müller (2013, 2) refer to ‘forms of spirituality’ that are ‘achieved at planes that are imagined at an altitude above everyday life’. In a discussion of uncertainty, Nolan (2006, 7) suggests that spirituality may even be an attempt to transcend (i.e. moving beyond) the uncertainties and insecurities of the postmodern era.

If spirituality is, among other things, transcendence, then it calls for the module lecturer and the teaching students in her/his logbook to take an inward journey of meaning-making and meaning-decoding together (Marshall 2009, 27); the ultimate destination of which is a deeper personal response to the mystery of existence – irrespective of the nature of the school subject (Jones 2005, 4). If education is, as some have said, ‘learning to see with new eyes,’ then surely attending to spirituality, as transcendence, is beneficial also to the ODL process, because it provides new vantage points from where both lecturer and teaching student (based on a mutual sense of belonging and purpose) may observe life (Jones 2005, 4; Marshall 2009, 27).

##### 4.4.1. Connection, engagement and existentialist questions

Spirituality in ODL praxis begins with questions, such as: ‘What is my experience?’, ‘What is my effect?’ and ‘What are the interrelationships between others and myself?’ (Jones 2005, 4), and with ‘existentialist questions’ in the school (as a space for practising meaning-making), such as ‘What is the meaning of my own teaching/learning?’ and ‘Why am I teaching/learning this?’ (cf. Krishnakumar and Neck 2002, 154). Spirituality in teaching and learning has also been shown to be associated with an enhanced sense of personal fulfilment among teachers (cf. Wessels and Müller 2013, 2). This helps to explain why many teaching students often describe the lecturers whom they regard as ‘good lecturers’ as having some sort of connective capacity. These lecturers intuitively understand how to connect themselves to their students, their students to one another, and everyone to the module being studied (Jones 2005, 5). They yearn for deep connections to themselves, to others, and to nature or a higher power (Jones 2005, 4). In this regard, spirituality may also be understood as a deep connection between lecturer, student and subject – a connection so honest, vital and vibrant that it cannot help but be relevant. It

is about reverence for the other (Gillen and English 2000, 85) and, as such, it requires from every teaching student a demonstrated willingness to allow both the subject that he or she teaches and the learners to engage him or her – and this goes for every school subject and for every scheduled or unscheduled contact period in or outside of class (Jones 2005, 7). Nourishment of this reciprocal reverence and willingness in (and outside) the classroom allows it to flourish in the world, wherever our teaching students may choose to go after graduating from their ODL programmes (cf. Jones 2005, 1).

#### 4.4.2. Journey towards wholeness

From the above, it is clear that spirituality, as a formative force that underlies reality (Jones 2005, 5) is all about making a difference and finding purpose (Palmer 2001) and, besides transcendence and connection, it may also be understood as (and in terms of) wholeness (Jones 2005, 5), especially as it relates to the notion of capturing the longing for human flourishing and authenticity (Downey 2006, 40). Wholeness is the inherent, seamless, interdependent quality of the world (Jones 2005, 5) and the qualities of transcendence and connection (relationship) are commonly believed to be inherent in this concept of wholeness (Jones 2005, 5). It is the duty, therefore, of lecturers to accompany their teaching students towards wholeness and to lead them in discerning this wholeness. Spirituality, as a formative force towards wholeness, requires lecturers to challenge themselves continuously, to engage in a critically reflective practice that encourages the continuous questioning of their own assumptions and beliefs (as well as those of their learners), and to listen carefully to the distance education needs of their teaching students.

#### 4.4.3. Compassion as knowledge of love

Another important aspect of spirituality in ODL is the compassionate motive, the considerate, sympathetic and empathetic driving force behind all ODL activities (Jones 2005, 5). This formative, driving character of spirituality leads us to suggest that ODL praxis might be in need of a new kind of knowledge – one that arises from love and compassion, one that has as its overriding purpose the reunification and reconstruction of broken selves and worlds, irrespective of the nature and content of the university subject that may be the pedagogic vehicle through which it is being taught. Teacher education clearly needs a spirituality of mutual, shared compassion that is aimed, not at exploiting and manipulating creation, but at reconciling the world to itself in and through particular subject-specific pedagogy and content. Spirituality as compassion is essentially soul-saving and world-saving. A knowledge that springs from love will wrap the lecturer, her teaching students and the subject content in compassion, ‘... in a bond of awesome responsibility as well as transforming joy; it will call them to involvement, mutuality, and accountability’ (Jones 2005, 6).

#### 4.5. Spiritual qualities of lecturers and teaching students

As suggested above, the synergy between the spirits of lecturers and their teaching students can enhance the spirituality of distance education. Although nebulous, numinous and potentially quite transitory (Kourie 2006, 22), spirituality can be understood as that spark of knowledge, inquiry, and/or skill, which brings life to distance-based pedagogy. It is the heart and soul of teaching and learning; it is, as mentioned, what remains within teaching students after their graduation from their ODL programmes. If future relationships between lecturer and teaching students wish to be (and remain) pedagogically viable and justifiable – especially in the context of the progressive application of spirit-killing technological systems – then both parties will have to search, actively, for opportunities to preserve this spiritual quality flowing from the reciprocity of the lecturer's spirit and that of the student, the reciprocity of inspirational teaching and a willingness to learn.

Spirituality in ODL flows from the engagement between an inspired ('spirited') lecturer possessing intimate knowledge of the subject's discipline and the enthusiastic ('spirited') student. This facilitates effective learning (Glazer 1999, 113). The spirituality of ODL can, therefore, be seen as an in-between, dialogic, dialogic and safe space where the spirits of lecturer and student are encouraged to join. In any ODL context, this joining of spirits should constitute a momentous event. This coming together of spirits has profound pedagogical implications, provided that we understand the difference between religion, ethics and spirituality, as explained in the subsection *Not religion and not ethics* above.

The need for accommodating the spiritual aspect of teaching and learning seems to have been recognised by some education planners. In Japan, for instance, '... the present teacher training ... emphasises that teachers should be conscious of morals and of their social responsibility aside from acquiring knowledge and mastery of teaching skills' (Karras and Wolhuter 2011, 229). Namibia has also recognised this need: '... a progressive paradigm of critical practitioner inquiry has facilitated the re-conceptualisation of the teacher's role from a view that saw teachers as passive implementers of ideas handed down from above to one where teachers are seen as critical and reflective practitioners who can inquire into their own practice to better understand and deal with problems that arise in teaching' (Karras and Wolhuter 2011, 811).

The time has come for all distance education providers to take a hard look at how lecturers and teaching students – as key players in social, political, cultural and economic development and in the attainment of a 'flourishing life' (what Aristotle would call a 'eudemonic life'<sup>8</sup>) (Spence 2011, 261 *et seq.*) – should be trained, or rather, *educated* in becoming and subsequently in being not only critical, but also, moral pedagogues/educators.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The above was an effort at showing how a proper understanding of the spirituality of ODL could lead to at least two results important to human well-being in general, and to teacher training in particular. Diligent, effective and spirited / spirit-filled education ideally leads to the formation of the person with integrity, the whole person, organic individuals, able to transcend themselves and to serve their neighbours. Secondly, the spirituality of ODL is one of the prerequisites for inculcating the creativity and critical reflexivity required for meeting the challenges of personal actualisation in a globalised and cosmopolitan future.

## NOTES

1. The term *paideia* (Greek: παιδεία) refers to the education of the ideal member of the polis. Originally, it incorporated both practical, subject-based schooling and a focus upon the socialization of individuals within the aristocratic order of the polis. The practical aspects of this education included subjects subsumed under the modern designation of the liberal arts (rhetoric, grammar and philosophy are examples), as well as scientific disciplines like arithmetic and medicine. An ideal and successful member of the polis would possess intellectual, moral and physical refinement.
2. In South Africa this tradition still dominates most stakeholders' and role-players' views of university education.
3. Individualism, in the sense in which I am using it here, does not correspond to notions of self-centeredness, power-lust, or the exploitation of others. It also does not equal vulgar selfishness or an exaggerated sense of self-importance and superiority to other people. Instead, I regard it as a way of viewing the world where the focus is primarily on individuals, instead of on collective groups of people separated by race, nationality, gender, religion, social status, etc.
4. Non-linear individualism is the result of the retreat of the classic institutions: state, class, nuclear family, ethnic group/tribe. Unlike Descartes's *cogito ergo sum* thinking-type individual, Beck (1992, 111) describes today's non-linear individual in terms of the dictum 'I am I': s/he puts together networks, constructs alliances and makes deals. S/he must live and is forced to live in an atmosphere of risk in which knowledge and life-changes are precarious (cf. Joubert 2013, 115).
5. *Homo economicus* behaves naturally out of self-interest and is relatively detached from the state.
6. Manipulatable man is created by the state and is continually encouraged to be 'perpetually responsive'.
7. Empirical research could then assess the validity of the theoretically proposed facets, which would contribute to the conceptual clarification of the concept.
8. Namely, a life lived by a supposed benevolent supernatural being.

## REFERENCES

- Abbs, P. 1995. *The educational imperative: A defense of Socratic and aesthetic learning*. Bristol, Pennsylvania: Taylor & Francis.
- Bauman, Z. 2000. *Liquid modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bauman, Z. 2007. *Liquid times. Living in age of uncertainty*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Beck, U. 1992. *Risk society: Towards a new modernity*. London: Sage.
- Beck, U. 1999. *World risk society*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Beck, U. 2007. *World at risk*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bloch, G. 2009. *The toxic mix. What's wrong with South Africa's schools and how to fix it?* Cape Town: Tafelberg.
- Coetzee, J. M. 2013. Universities head for extinction. Available at <http://mg.co.za/print/2013-11-01-universities-head-for-extinction> (accessed 7 November 2013).
- Cook, C. C. H. 2004. Addiction and spirituality. *Addiction* 99: 539–551.
- Cowen, R. 2013. From Hubris to Pathos: A comparative post-mortem on the education of teachers in England. Paper read at 1<sup>st</sup> International Symposium on Education and Teacher Education Worldwide: Current Reforms, Problems and Challenges, Rethymno, Crete, Greece, May 28–30.
- De Jager Meezenbroek, E., B. Garssen., M. Van den Berg, D. Van Dierendonck, A. Visser and W. B. Schaufeli. 2012. Measuring spirituality as a universal human experience: A review of spirituality questionnaires. *Journal of Religious Health* 51: 336–354.
- Downey, M. J. 2006. Experiences of teachers' daily work which nourish and sustain the spirituality of lay teachers in Catholic high schools. Unpublished DEd thesis. Virginia: Australian Catholic University (McAuley Campus).
- Frankl, V. E. 2004. *Man's search for meaning*. Rider: London.
- Gillen, M. A. and L. M. English. 2000. Controversy, questions, and suggestions for further reading. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* 85: 85–91.
- George, L. K., D. B. Larson, H. G. Koenig and M. E. McCullough. 2000. Spirituality and health: What we know, what we need to know. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* 19: 102–116.
- Glazer, S. ed. 1999. *The heart of learning: Spirituality in education*. New York: Penguin Putnam.
- Goosen, D. 2012. Oor die geestelike. On the spiritual. *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe* 52(4): 707–718.
- Harris, K. A. and K. Purrone. 2003. Definitions and discomfort: Towards an integration of spirituality in multicultural counseling. Poster presented at Great Lakes 2003 Conference in Counseling Psychology, Kalamazoo MI.
- Hill, P. C. 2005. Measurement in the psychology of religion and spirituality: Current status and evaluation. In *Handbook of the psychology of religion and spirituality*, ed. R. F. Paloutzian and L. Park, 43–61. London: The Guilford Press.
- Jansen, J. D. 2012. Rector calls on government to declare crisis in education. Available at [http://mg.co.za/article/2012-10-03-rector-calls-on-govt-to-declare-crisis-in-education\\_](http://mg.co.za/article/2012-10-03-rector-calls-on-govt-to-declare-crisis-in-education_) (accessed 15 October 2013).
- Jansen, J. D. 2012. Declare crisis in education. Available at <http://www.moneyweb.co.za/moneyweb-south-africa/declare-crisis-in-education-jonathan-jansen> (accessed 3 October 2013)

- John, V. 2013. Late intervention condemns pupils to 'insurmountable' challenges. Available at <http://mg.co.za/print/2013-10-24-too-little-too-late-condemns-pupils> (accessed 25 October 2013).
- Jones, L. 2005. What does spirituality in education mean? *Journal of College and Character* 6(7): 1–7.
- Joubert, S. 2013. Not by order, nor by dialogue: The metanoetic presence of the Kingdom of God in a fluid new world and church. *Acta Theologica* 33(1): 114–134.
- Karras, K. G. and C. C. Wolhuter. 2011. *International handbook of teacher education world-wide – Issues and challenges*, vol. I and II. Athens: ION Publishing Group.
- Kazamias, A. M. 2013. 'Not for techné but for Paideia': Not the teacher-technocrat, but the teacher-pedagogue in the new knowledge Cosmopolis. Paper read at 1<sup>st</sup> International Symposium on Education and Teacher Education Worldwide: Current Reforms, Problems and Challenges, Rethymno, Crete, Greece, May 28–30.
- Koerner, J. D. 1963. *The miseducation of American teachers*. Boston: The Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Kourie, C. 2006. The 'turn' to spirituality. *Acta Theological Supplementum* 8: 19–30.
- Krishnakumar, S. and C. P. Neck. 2002. The 'what', 'why' and 'how' of spirituality in the workplace. *Journal of Managerial Psychology* 17(3): 153–164.
- Kubow, P. K. 2011. The creative spirit and comparative education. In *Navigating the C's*. In *An introduction to comparative education*, ed. P. L. Schneller and C. C. Wolhuter, 155–168. Potchefstroom: Keurkopié.
- Marshall, J. M. 2009. Describing the elephant: Preservice teachers talk about spiritual reasons for becoming a teacher. *Teacher Education Quarterly* 25–44, Spring.
- Moberg, D. O. 2002. Assessing and measuring spirituality: Confronting dilemmas of universal and particular evaluative criteria. *Journal of Adult Development* 9: 47–60.
- Morrow, W. E. 2005. Why is the 3+1 (3-year BEd + 1-year AdvDip: Induction) proposal better than the 4-year BEd? Memorandum prepared for Dean's Forum, Port Elizabeth, 16 August 2005.
- Muldoon, M. and N. King. 1995. Spirituality, health care, and bioethics. *Journal of Religion and Health* 34: 329–349.
- Noddings, N. 1993. *Educating for intelligent belief or unbelief*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Noddings, N. 1995. Teaching themes of care. *Phi Delta Kappan* 76(9): 675–679.
- Nolan, A. 2006. *Jesus today*. Cape Town: Double Storey Books.
- Olssen, M. 1996. In defence of the welfare state and publicly provided education. *Journal of Education Policy* 11: 340.
- Online Etymology Dictionary. 2013. Available at <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?search=spirit> (accessed 20 September 2013).
- Palmer, P. J. 1983. *To know as we are known: A spirituality of education*. San Francisco: Harper and Row.
- Palmer, P. J. 1993. *To know as we are known: Education as a spiritual journey*. San Francisco: Harper.
- Palmer, P. J. 1998. *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Palmer, P. J. 1998–1999. Evoking the spirit in public education. *Educational Leadership* 56(4): 6–11.

- Palmer, P. J. 2001. Teaching with heart and soul: Reflections on spirituality in teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education* 54(5): 376.
- Robinson, M. 2001. Teachers as mentors: A critical view of teacher development in South African schools. *Perspectives in Education* 19(2): 99–115.
- Seifert, L. S. 2002. Toward a psychology of religion, spirituality, meaning-search, and aging: Past research and a practical application. *Journal of Adult Development* 9(1): 61–70. Available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1023/A:1013829318213> (accessed 25 October 2013).
- Spence, E. H. 2011. Information, knowledge and wisdom: Groundwork for the normative evaluation of digital information and its relation to the good life. *Ethics Information Technology* 13: 261–275.
- Van der Walt, J. L. and F. J. Potgieter. 2011. How citizens with integrity can contribute to social justice in an unequal society. *Journal of Social Sciences* 28(2): 77–86.
- Vaughan, F. 1991. Spiritual issues in psychotherapy. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* 23: 105–119.
- Van Deventer, I. 2013. Management strategies for effective social justice practice in schools. Potchefstroom, Faculty of Education Sciences, North-West University. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis. Available at <http://dspace.nwu.ac.za/handle/10394/8558>.
- Wessels, F. and J. C. Müller. 2013. Spirituality in narratives of meaning. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 69(2): art. #1187, 7. Available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v69i2.1187> (accessed 25 October 2013).
- Zimmerman, L., M. Botha, S. Howie and C. Long. 2007. Transcending the great divide: Language and literacy training for foundation and intermediate phase teachers at a South African university. Selected findings from the TLEP university case study. Conference paper presented at the Teacher Development and Institutional Change in an Evolving Education Context conference, held at the Kopanong Conference Centre, 28 and 29 May 2007, Benoni.
- Zinnbauer, B. J., K. L. Pargament and A. B. Scott. 1999. The emerging meanings of religiousness and spirituality: Problems and prospects. *Journal of Personality* 67: 889–919.