

Subtle Energies in the Classroom: Phenomenological Research on the role of Energy in Education

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Abstract:

If teachers and other educators understood the workings of classrooms and schools based upon the transfer of subtle energies and collective participation in what has been called the "sacred mind", how would this transform educational practices that have to potential to thereby transform society? How might teachers prepare themselves to be ready for whole-hearted involvement in this exchange of energies with their students? Concepts from quantum physics and an exploration of love as energy are explored. These ideas provide educators who might not be willing to accept spiritual explanations concepts to build upon as they begin to understand and experiment with the phenomena of subtle energies in educational environments

Introduction:

I am teaching a class. It is a class of graduate students who are teachers and I am THEIR teacher. We are exploring various approaches to teaching, each with a methodology and philosophy of its own. I've planned the lesson carefully, taking in to account who my learners are as much as I am able to; as much as I know of them. The activities I've chosen to do are ones I've done many times before. They are tried, true and effective and I've adjusted them to fit nicely – or so I think - within the flow of this particular class. But as the class unfolds, I can see that my careful plans are going nowhere. There is deep resistance to the content, approach and everything I am trying to do. I can feel it as well as read it in the students' minds. Why is there this resistance? What allows me to read and interpret students' reactions? Why did this lesson, that worked so well other times, fall flat today? What interpretations can I make about what is

happening? This lesson appears to be leaving the students with frustration, resistance and a profound lack of inspiration, hardly the goal for the educational process.

In another class, I find myself taking a huge risk by doing an activity whose outcome is uncertain, an activity I have never done before. The idea came to me in a dream the night before and was fleshed out while I was taking a morning shower. I have some ideas about how it might unfold and where it could lead, but overall I am trusting my intuition that it will be profitable for the learning of my students. From the moment I begin the lesson and this new activity, I feel as if I am in complete synch with the students. I almost feel as if I am reading their minds as I adjust the activity to meet their shifting needs. Needless to say, the activity and the lesson are a huge success. Students gain new, important perspectives, and I do too. More remarkable is that the whole encounter had a quality of effortlessness. I feel that I have given my best and that this has energized me in the way that teaching does when it is not a struggle. Most importantly, the students are inspired to not only take what they have learned in to new realms of insight, but also they are inspired to support their students in new and positive ways. It is impossible to predict or assess the ultimate positive impact to these countless unknown students and to the environments in which they live, work and contribute.

What factors are impacting these dynamics? Why did one class go so smoothly while the other was a struggle? How do we define the energy that was so positive and growth-filled in the second example, and so debilitating in the first? How do we make education a process that not only helps the individual but that, by definition, always also helps the social context of the learner? Education, in all too many situations, focuses solely on the intellectual strength of the individual. By ignoring or even denying the spiritual, emotional and other aspects of the individual, education is not truly educational. We need to make a case for paying attention to those other elements of the individual and their social contexts in order to facilitate education becoming the socially transformative force it can and should be.

It would be an over-simplification to say that these are simple human dynamics that, therefore, don't warrant consideration. There is something at play which must be examined and understood in order for truly effective teaching and learning to take place in the classrooms where we teach. This "something at play" is the presence and interaction of subtle energies.

Subtle energy or subtle energies as a term was first used by Albert Einstein to describe a set of energies that he was able to discern but couldn't measure. It was later brought in to usage by Stephan Schwartz at an Esalen conference on the subject in the late 70's. Later, in 1989,

Schwartz designed and named the ISSEEM (International Society for the Study of Energy and Energy Medicine) Journal, *Subtle Energies*. Numerous researchers from realms of medicine, physics, healing, and philosophy now routinely use the term subtle energy to indicate energy that falls outside of the prevailing, main-stream science's view of energy forces. For example, researcher William Tiller (1997) explains how he will use the term subtle energies, "Subtle energies are. . . those beyond those forming the four well known and accepted classes of forces. . . ." (p. 14). These forces are gravity, electromagnetism, and the strong and weak nuclear forces. Richard Gerber, M.D. (1988, 1996, 1999) employs the term subtle energies in his books on vibrational medicine. Gerber goes to some length to describe subtle energy as it applies to humans, elements from nature and the role that these energies play in health and healing. Indeed, in discussions on the dynamics of health and healing, numerous practitioners and researchers such as Barbara Brennan (1987), Valerie Hunt (1989), Larry Dossey (1992, 1996, 1999), Delores Krieger (1976, 1979), Herbert Benson (1975), and Jeanne Achterburg (1994) describe and explore the effects of subtle energies and their uses in various healing interventions.

In the area of the social sciences numerous works describe the role subtle energies can play in the transformation of the personality and psyche. Stanley Krippner (1988), Roger Walsh, (1997) Stanislov Grof (1992), Charles Tart (1985) are among the many who have explored these dynamics in their work, although their choice of terminology differs. William Collinge (1998) has provided a useful compilation of various studies on subtle energy that have been conducted in many different philosophical and scientific realms. With all that has been explored and written about subtle energy, it is no longer an esoteric term used only by a few far-out researchers. Rather, it is a term that usefully describes a whole range of phenomena that humans routinely experience and which many, including myself, are trying to understand and explain.

In a variety of ways current scientific understandings are starting to resemble spiritual insights including that of the palpable and measurable positive impact of love and acceptance on the dynamics of a given situation.

We can begin to see things that would formerly have been viewed as non-rational in a new and intriguing light. For example, Valerie Hunt at UCLA has demonstrated for nearly three decades that it is possible to scientifically measure emotional shifts in human auras. (1996). Russell Targ, long affiliated with remote viewing experiments (which test the ability of some people to see and alter events at a distance), has shown with statistical and replicable significance that people can know about and alter events far away from them through the use of their energy and intention alone. (1998). Through these and dozens of other experiments referenced below (see

end note), science has provided significant evidence that we are all interconnected and that my energy will influence yours.

And so, science in its many streams and spiritual traditions in their many forms have all talked about something which is now referred to as subtle energy. It is useful to focus on existing understandings from these studies that can then be applied to education. Now is the time that we brought these ideas in to our work as educators.

Theories from quantum physics such as non-locality, the fact that atoms (of which we all - and indeed the entire universe - are made of) influence one another continuously, regardless of proximity or time, and an understanding of the particle/wave dynamic, among other concepts, help us to see how these ideas can influence our work in classrooms. A brief exploration of some of these concepts follows.

Nonlocality:

Quantum theory provides an explanation for a distinctly nonlocal dynamic, which is one the most marvelous and mysterious aspects of it. Nonlocal means that particles and waves (and people, ideas, thoughts, etc.) influence one another regardless of their physical proximity. Particles, once they have been in contact, seem to continue to influence each other for all time and regardless of the distance they have traveled from one another. It would appear that part of the particle becomes, somehow, bonded with other particles creating a quantum “wholeness”. Quantum nonlocality, which was suggested by Bell’s theorem, has been experimentally verified on many occasions. Alain Aspect, in 1982, (in Gribbin, 1984) proved that this dynamic exists and his experiments have been successfully repeated numerous times in varied locations. These experiments show us that separation (of our atoms, our selves and our consciousness) is fundamentally wrong. From a slightly different research perspective, Childre and Martin (1999) also describe how information can be exchanged instantly, or nearly so, through this idea of quantum nonlocality (p. 257). Many consider quantum nonlocality as one of the most important discoveries of recent science. (Kafatos and Kafatou, 1991).

Phase Entanglement:

This concept (Herbert, 1985, p. 223) also referred to as interconnectedness is another way of talking about nonlocality. The phase entanglement theory is, again, premised on the quantum theory that if any part or whole of a system is in contact with another part of another system or

entity, for any amount of time, it seems to leave a part of its system - known as a phase - with the other. Thus any sense of separate existence becomes more myth than truth. Not only is no man, or woman, an island but it appears that we are connected to one another in mysterious and enduring ways. This appears to be what quantum theory is pointing to.

Waves and Particles:

Likewise, quantum theory looks at matter on the scale of atoms and particles, but it also can apply on the larger, meta-scale of the behavior of large entities, including the universe. One core theory demonstrates that light, a fundamental energy of the universe exists in BOTH particle and wave forms, simultaneously. Part of Planck's contribution to this understanding was studies demonstrating that if you design an experiment to see light in its particle form, this is what you will find. This same light, however, can also be seen in its wave form. It exists in both forms simultaneously. (Herbert 1985). What you see – particle or wave – depends entirely on what you are looking for and trying to measure. Why is this so important?

Taking it to the level of the human body, which has been presumed to house human consciousness, this duality becomes very interesting. We have typically viewed the human (which can be thought of as another form of light) as having a particle nature, rather than a wave nature. The body appears solid to us; for most of us most of the time it does not flicker or waver, it is dense and whole. The minute one understands, however, that this same dense body ALSO has wave-like properties, many “extraordinary” human experiences become quite “normal”. This becomes particularly intriguing when you consider what happens if consciousness itself is understood as a wave.

The key point here is to understand that thoughts – energy – consciousness – intentionality, are waves, rather than particles. This makes it much easier to envision how these qualities of consciousness are transmitted over time and space and how our thought (waves) affect others.

Childre and Martin (1997). American researchers, have pursued a similar line of thinking with their concept of Heartmath. The Heartmath theory asserts that as the heart oscillates (beats), it is a powerful source of energy in a very literal sense and that this energy source can be used to heal both oneself, others and social situations. Childre and Martin claim that the heart is actually a “thinking”, initiating organ with great intelligence and wisdom of its own. It then communicates its intelligence to the brain and the rest of the body in four ways, biochemically, neurologically, biophysically and energetically (through electromagnetic field interactions). (p. 28). The energy

given off by the heart is sent throughout the body via the heart's electromagnetic field. This energy is almost five thousand times greater in strength than that produced by the brain, it can be found in every cell in the body and can be measured up to eight to ten feet away with special devices known as magnetometers. (p. 33). Of course, these ideas are already well known in spiritual study centers, where the western notion of a dichotomy between the heart and mind are not relevant.

Practical Applications:

These quantum influences would potentially have important impacts on classroom dynamics which influence learning.

From four decades of experience in classrooms as a student, a teacher and eventually a teacher of teachers, I know that classrooms are complex places where nurturing, support and learning can take place. They are places that can help to heal an individual of a whole range of social and psychological ills suffered in other environments. Classrooms are also places that can be toxic, even extremely so, and which can make people ill, on physical, emotional and spiritual levels. Therefore we, as teachers, as people granted a certain position of power and influence in classrooms, have a huge responsibility to help make these places as healing as possible and certainly not toxic.

How, then, can educators understand and use the concepts of subtle energies to improve the energetic quality of their teaching? Many educational philosophers have talked about the sacred space of classrooms, where anything can be possible, and the sacred quality of the teaching and learning process. Several educators have written about some of the less-obvious "energetic" interventions which they do for their students.

Parker Palmer (1993, 1998) is well known for having come forth to clearly assert the importance of the energy of the teacher, his/her spiritual orientation and the general presence of spirituality in educational settings. Mary Rose O'Reilly (1993, 1998) has also written about the inner life of teachers and proposed an understanding of the work of teachers as having an aspect of contemplative practice. Educators at OISE (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education) and, in particular, John P. Miller (1994) have explored various approaches to the inner workings of the teacher, focusing particularly on meditation as a tool for teachers.

We can begin to see, therefore, that some people within educational settings are talking about the inner life of teachers and the need for teachers to start with her or himself. In this way inner transformation is linked to social transformation. The teacher transforms and is then able to bring about similar transformations with their students. What I propose adding to this understanding is a conscious focus on the subtle energies that emanate from the teacher and the learners and that are exchanged in the learning dynamic. In this view we teachers must become aware of who we are, what we bring, and what kinds of energies we project. Are we bringing love, calm, focus, openness? Are we bringing disillusionment, fear, shame, hatred? Who are we and what do we bring energetically?

One aspect of this that has been consuming my thinking in recent years is the importance of the existence of unconditional love and respect for the students I teach. The fundamental and most powerful energy of spiritual traditions is love. When love can be cultivated and sent out, benefits are experienced by all – practitioner and recipient alike. As many spiritual teachers describe, the heart is capable of immeasurable love and this love is large enough to include the entire universe. Given that, our hearts are certainly capable of offering this kind of transformative love to those students we encounter. We have the capacity for enormous giving of love, of sending out this powerful energy.

But what does love mean in educational settings? Carl Rogers referred to a sense of “unconditional positive regard”. Unconditional positive regard carries a certain kind of energy which one could also refer to as a type of ongoing blessing freely given to the students we teach.

A much-beloved and respected educator, Earl Stevick, (1998) referred to the notion of implicit, subtle messages which the educator can relay to the students. His view is that these messages, carried to the student as “vibes” are more powerful than overt, verbal messages of support BECAUSE of their subtle nature. “These are indications of confidence in oneself and in the student, of acceptance of the student, and of pleasure in the encounter.” (p. 40).

Stevick also developed a so-called "inside and between" maxim that relates to this discussion, "success or failure - depends less on linguistic analyses and pedagogical techniques than on what goes on inside and between the people in the classroom". (p. xii).

Part of what goes on “inside and between” people is an exchange of subtle energies.

Many educators refer to the sacred quality of teaching and even of the shared “sacred mind” that is co-created in educational settings. Chris Bache (2000) is one who has systematically looked at his own teaching in terms of shared and transferred energy. He has also described the dynamic of learning and comprehension for students to somehow be enhanced over time and with additional taught sessions of a course. A part of this, naturally, can be attributed to the increased experience of the teacher. But the entire phenomenon cannot be explained away that easily! We can explore the idea that a course has a subtle energy of its own exerting a field of influence on subsequent teachings of it.

How might this be understood? Here is evidence of the notion of the 100th monkey; that is, the understanding arrived at from studies which indicate that monkeys not in physical proximity to each other learn a skill faster after a significant number of them have learned that skill. There is, literally, a quantum leap in the speed and accuracy of learning. It could well be attributed to the creation of a learning field or situation that allows for learning to happen at a greater speed.

As Bache has speculated,

"The concepts of energetic resonance and group fields have long been recognized in the world's esoteric spiritual traditions, where it is common knowledge that the progressive anchoring of superordinate awareness is facilitated by community. This is why *sangha*, the community of like-minded spiritual seekers, is one of Buddhism's three refuges, and *ecclesia*, the Church, is frequently described as a boat that carries us safely to the distant shore." (p. 211).

We can see that the concept of energy, referred to here as subtle energy, is not completely foreign in the realm of educational scholarship. The compelling question that remains is how to work with these ideas in thoughtful and effective ways. If teachers would begin to view the workings of classrooms and schools based upon transfer of energy and collective participation in the sacred mind, this would undoubtedly impact on teachers' personal and educational practices.

First of all, I believe that teachers would become more concerned about their own personal, individual energetic systems. They would attend to the inner workings of their souls and psyches and not focus solely on their intellect. Teachers would find it valuable to explore their own inner dynamics through reflection, meditation and in certain cases, psychotherapy. Teachers would realize that every thought they think; every action they undertake, every decision they make in and out of the classroom transmits some type of energy and, therefore, has an impact on the total

energy dynamic of their teaching. While this perhaps might feel like an onerous burden for certain educators, teachers need to own the full responsibility of what they generate and foster in their roles as educators.

How then can educators begin to explore these subtle energy dynamics for themselves?

The British scientist, Rupert Sheldrake (1995), put forth his theory that science and the accompanying experiments should be something that any one can do. He discusses how important it is for average people to engage in exploration, to test theories and to share their results. He has proposed a set of experiments which non-scientists could easily do and which would help further the understanding of how the revolutionary new understandings of the quantum world actually work. Sheldrake's ideas and approach make enormous sense and I would like to propose that educators take up a similar challenge. I would invite educators to begin to experiment with subtle energies in their classroom contexts and share their results with one another. The result of this will be an enhanced understanding of how these mysterious but pervasive energies affect students, teachers, administrators and the entire learning process

By way of a starting point, I present here a set of practices that I believe may help teachers in their understanding of subtle energies. Although this set of practices is certainly not exhaustive and necessarily needs to be expanded based upon the experiences of other teachers, it is a useful starting point.

Meditation, Prayer and Intentionality:

Meditation, prayer and positive intentionality are core practices that are beneficial in and of themselves, but that also provide an underpinning that supports any other practice. I put them together in one category, and include the word "intention" to indicate the subtle but powerful effect of what we intend to happen, and how that gets translated in to our thoughts, prayers and meditations. Any form of meditation, prayer or even non-spiritual positive intention can have an extremely beneficial impact on the energy of the teacher. There exist so many different forms of meditation and prayer to choose from. Depending on the belief system of the teacher, any practice that improves awareness of thoughts and energy will be helpful. Some forms stress the use of a mantra (or sacred words); some focus on movement such as prayer walking and walking meditation, where the individual is encouraged to bring their full attention to where they are walking, to their breathing, and/or to blessing or praying for those around them. Some forms of meditation are focused on communion with the natural world and are best carried out in parks,

forests or other natural places. Meditation, although understood to be many different things, is really quite simple in its benefits.

Daniel Goleman (1988) describes it this way,

"Meditation trains the capacity to pay attention. This sets it apart from other ways of relaxing, most of which let the mind wander as it will. This sharpening of attention lasts beyond the meditation session itself. It shows up in a number of ways in the rest of the meditator's day. Meditation, for example, has been found to improve one's ability to pick up subtle perceptual cues in the environment, and to pay attention to what is going on rather than letting the mind wander elsewhere. These skills mean that in conversation with another person, the meditator should be more empathic. Because the meditator can pay sharper attention to what the other person is doing and saying, he can pick up more of the hidden messages the other is sending." (p. 166).

Speaking personally, the form of meditation that I practice is vipassana, with a strong component of mindfulness. The distinction between vipassana and mindfulness is primarily this: vipassana is a form of Buddhist meditation that is practiced formally sitting on a meditation cushion, while mindfulness is a form of meditation as well as a practice which is purposefully brought in to daily life and in to all day-to-day activities.

The specifics of my mindfulness/vipassana meditation practice include sitting on a meditation pillow, and, for twenty-one minutes, practicing staying focused on my breath and on the present moment. Sometimes I do what I call "particle/wave meditation". In this form, I use the in breath to focus on my particle - matter - form; the fact that my consciousness is housed in a human body that is sitting on the cushion. On the out breath I focus on my wave energy form and feel the interconnections I share with all beings and especially with those students I happen to be teaching.

If I find I am distracted by thoughts of ideas, problems, people, I try to send energy of lovingkindness (unconditional love) to whomever comes to mind, then bring my focus back to being present and breathing. Finally, as the meditation period is drawing to a close, I use the mantra, "I am healthy, wise and blessed with abundance in all areas of my life. . . May all beings be healthy, wise and blessed with such abundance."

It is clear to me that this meditation practice is the bedrock for all other energy practices in my experience. Meditation helps to expand my capacity for inner coherence which then means that as I send and receive energy, I do so in a clearer and cleaner manner. When I meditate daily, I have increased tolerance, enhanced awareness of life events unfolding around me, and a greater capacity for connection and compassion. I am able to truly see, hear and understand the students I teach. I am present to who they are and find myself more able to meet them with respect, honesty and compassion. For me, meditation is a key factor in subtle energy work.

However, other teachers may find that one of the other forms of prayer, meditation or non-spiritual positive intentions makes more sense to them. The point is not to be put off by practices which may seem foreign or strange, but rather to seek and use those practices which arise from your personal spiritual tradition and which help you manage your own energy and to focus more effectively and lovingly on that of your students.

How does meditation help teachers work more effectively and lovingly with their students? The meditation tradition is grounded in an attitude of unconditional love and respect for all other beings. Unfortunately, in education, this fundamental relational quality is often ignored or avoided. Practicing mindfulness, meditation, and/or regular prayer as part of a teacher's professional practice will help teachers to reconnect with the importance of loving students and of holding them in a place of unconditional positive regard.

HeartMath:

HeartMath (Childre and Martin, 1999), as previously discussed, is a concept and process based upon the understanding that the heart has intelligence and energy of its own that impacts on the rest of the body as well as on others around us. Studies have demonstrated that the heart emits energy and information that impacts on the functioning of the brain as well as on people that come in contact with that energy. Therefore, creating an increased state of coherence within the workings of the heart becomes a factor in creating an increased state of coherence the classrooms in which we teach, not to mention the entire world around us. HeartMath research has demonstrated the efficacy of this.

In HeartMath, one uses visualization to, communicate, in a sense, with the heart and to encourage it to act out of its own wisdom. A core technique is what HeartMath researchers call "freeze frame". In this technique, one consciously disengages from normal mental or emotional reactions to an event, while moving the attention to the heart region of the body and invoking

feelings of love. It is helpful to focus on an individual that one loves or a situation that was appreciated as part of generating the feelings of love. By consciously bringing loving, compassionate, appreciative feelings in to the equation, it becomes altered. Thus, the wisdom of the heart is brought in to shape and heal challenging life situations. "Love, in this context, is defined as benevolent heart focus towards the well-being of others" (Tiller, p. 213).

It has been found that energy levels of the heart, at the subtle and perhaps even physical levels, are altered by use of this heart focus technique. As William Tiller, who has studied HeartMath along side other subtle energy techniques, says, "This subtle level structure appears to be a type of antenna array system for both receiving and transmitting the various qualities of love both over an increasing broad frequency band and with increasing gain. As a consequence of such changes, an individual's intuitive skills greatly increase." (p. 217-218)

Doc Childre and Howard Martin (1999) who have conducted the primary research and writing on the HeartMath process state that the energy that is emitted by the heart is approximately five thousand times stronger than that put out by the brain. This energy has been measured at a distance of 10 feet, with magnetometers. (p. 33). And research indicates that with more sensitive measuring devices, this energy will be measurable at much greater distances. Childre et al write that, "research evidence suggests that energetic information contained in the heart's field isn't detected only by our own brains and bodies but can also be registered by people around us." (p. 34)

HeartMath, with its own logo and name recognition, is actually a process advocated by many people from science, social science and religion as a way of altering our inner dynamics and creating increased healthy connection with others. Valerie Hunt, head of the Energy Fields Laboratory at UCLA, has described similar processes, (1997, p. 26-29) which have yielded good results.

Hunt describes lovingness as the feeling of love, without attachments, judgments or even, necessarily, people involved. Although she does not claim that lovingness emanates from the heart or heart chakra, I focus the meditation on my heart in the process from the HeartMath theory.

The application of Heart Math to classroom contexts should be fairly self-explanatory. My own experience is that if I am feeling frustrated by some dynamic in my classroom, am losing focus or inspiration, by focusing on the energy of my heart and asking for its wisdom to guide me I can

find my way through to a solution. I have found it is entirely possible to completely alter the energetic atmosphere of a class from negative/struggling to peaceful and harmonious by engaging the energy of my heart.

One might ask, what does this shift in the energetic atmosphere look like to the teacher? The phenomena of learning, like the phenomena of a changed energetic atmosphere, is not observable. With regard to measuring learning this is why teachers rely on evidence of learning to evaluate whether or not it has happened; evidence typically involves a written or oral assessment of some kind. In education this is the rationale for standardized testing. While such testing does assess certain things, skilled teachers know that standardized assessments do not equate learning. Likewise, assessing a shift in classroom energy is not something that can be tested in any kind of standardized manner. The measure of shifts of energy are typically conducted with the teacher's reading of and interpreting student energy, facial expressions, and even more intangibly, the prevailing energy in the classroom. Phenomenological studies indicate that students experience the difference in classroom energy as relaxing, judgment free and loving. In these environments, students relax, feel loved and therefore tend to learn more.

Visualization:

There is, again, a whole range of visualization techniques available for teachers who might feel drawn to this approach. Through meditation, reflection and other practices, I have become aware of some of the inherent imagery in my mind. I have become clearer on how the images I hold either help or hinder my ability to know and meet students where they are, and how, in addition, they augment or diminish my general sense of well being. As a result of this, it has become clear that visualization techniques are also helpful. As I attempt to tame my inner dynamics in order to be more effective in the use of subtle energies, I am aware that I cannot effectively support others through subtle energies if I have an incoherent and less-than-positive overall outlook. Visualization techniques, therefore, have been an important addition to the process.

I have used two basic visualization practices, although I am aware of many others and make use of them as needed.

First, within my daily meditation period, I use a visualization to accompany the loving meditation. I bring in to mind a picture of inner-coherence and harmony, generally through the use of pleasing, calming colors. For me, these are greens, blues, violets. By bringing these color wavelengths in to my mind, there is automatically generated a feeling of peace.

Second, I use a visualization that is actually an outgrowth of the HeartMath process, which is to call my heart in to focus and see it as capable of loving and having compassion for all people. I see my heart as being large enough to encompass all suffering and able to embrace and provide love to all people. In that visualization, my heart literally expands and becomes larger than me; indeed on certain occasions it is larger than the Earth herself. I have also applied this technique to groups of students by visualizing each student in turn in their best possible personal light and by seeing the classroom energetic dynamic as positive and conducive to learning and healing. Bache (2000) offers a similar description of his use of a specific Tibetan meditation as a way of sending the subtle energy of positive, focused intention to his students.

In traditional academic settings subtle energy and the study of it are viewed as a largely speculative endeavor. Despite the many rigorous studies that have been conducted and the impressive findings which have resulted, many scientists still assert that the research is shaky and unscientific; thus, the resulting findings are subject to harsh criticism and rejection. Therefore, while I am utterly convinced, as are many others, of the reality and importance of subtle energies, it is important to acknowledge that many find these concepts too speculative to engage with in any meaningful way.

The above notwithstanding, I encourage teachers to experiment with these techniques or others of your own choosing. I welcome hearing the results of your experiments that you can either post to the interactive web address listed below, or e-mail to me. The more that we can share our experiences, the greater the chances of generating a larger field of coherence in the energetic dynamics of education.

Conclusion:

Education is a powerful force for social transformation – or to impede such transformation. While in essence education is a process of energy exchange between teachers and students, this exchange is not limited to individual growth and change. An individual's learning and his or her growing awareness of shifting energies in the learning experience will help all learners understand how each of them can participate in the shifts in awareness that are demanded at this time. The question to ponder is : How do we teachers reach our students; how do we ensure that what we do with students will yield effective results for the positive transformation of our schools and other entities of learning and – effectively – for the positive transformation of the cultures in which we live and for the benefit of all beings?

A challenge to Teachers:

Become alive to the subtle energies present within and around you, in your classrooms and in your relationships with students. Learn to feel these energies and to understand their meanings. Engage in practices that will help you to understand your own energies and those of your students. Share what you learn with others and encourage your colleagues to explore an awareness of subtle energies. This shared understanding and awareness will help us all to teach, to plan and to be present with our students, their work and their lives.

“Each human being . . . participates in an inseparable way in society, and in the planet. . . such participation goes on, perhaps ultimately to some yet more comprehensive mind. . . beyond even the human species as a whole”.

David Bohm

End Note:

Anyone who is interested in reading about the many studies on subtle energies, quantum non-locality and related topics, may please see the reference list. Of particular significance is research reported by William Collinge, Larry Dossey, Russell Targ and Jane Kutra, William Tiller and Dean Radin.

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