



Vol.5 No.2 (2022)

Journal of Applied Learning & Teaching

ISSN : 2591-801X

Content Available at : <http://journals.sfu.ca/jalt/index.php/jalt/index>

'Heartware' for the Compassionate Teacher: Humanizing the academy through mindsight, attentive love, and storytelling

Eunice Tan^A

A

College of Arts, Business, Law and Social Sciences, Murdoch University

Keywords

Attentive love;
compassion;
humanizing pedagogy;
kindness pedagogy;
mindfulness;
storytelling.

Abstract

To counter the implications of fast academia, recent discourse has conceptualized the slow movement as a catalyst for humanizing the academy. Concurrently, there have been increased advocacy for pedagogical kindness within educational settings. This paper focuses on the human(e) elements of learning and teaching, such as empathy, kindness, and compassion. Whilst emphasis in educational discourse have frequently been placed on the hardware and software of teaching and learning practice, the focus on the virtues of 'heartware' and compassion have been limited. Specifically, there has been no study in which the thematic dimensions of: (1) mindsight and mindfulness, (2) attentive love and pedagogical kindness, and (3) storytelling in education is amalgamated to support learning. Within this context, the compassionate teacher aims to not only inspire learning journeys that are positive, engaging and fulfilling, but to also foster learning environments that are more equitable, supportive, and conducive for learners of all capabilities. This paper is conceptual in nature and proposes an approach to humanize the academy through the coaction of mindsight, attentive love, and the teacher storyteller. A conceptual framework illustrating the human(e) dimensions of 'heartware' for the compassionate teacher is also proposed.

Correspondence

E.Tan@murdoch.edu.au ^A

Article Info

Received 26 April 2022

Received in revised form 19 July 2022

Accepted 19 July 2022

Available online 16 August 2022

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37074/jalt.2022.5.2.ss1>

Introduction

Economy, industry, and society seem to be moving at an increasingly fast pace within our modern frantic world. Likewise, our education sector has not been spared from the relentless pursuit of productivity, competitiveness, and accelerated expectations. In the face of an increasingly neoliberal, performance-driven environment of academia, it can be a challenge to preserve empathy, kindness and compassion in learning and teaching. Consequently, Berg and Seeber (2016) and O'Neill (2014) propose the adaptation of the slow movement in academia, as a catalyst for humanizing the academy and supporting the well-being of academics, students, and society. The authors challenge the prevalent culture of speed, standardization, and corporatization of higher education. In this regard, humanizing discourse within the educational sphere is generally grounded on the notions of: (1) the value of dignity and critical consciousness towards each other's perspectives, values, growth and actions; (2) advocacy for kindness, humility, empathy, and love as revisionist ideals for humanizing interactions, engagement, and our way of life; and (3) a shift away from the instrumental, neoliberal tenets of education engagement and activities, to more humanistic, dialectical activities and intrinsic values (del Carmen Salazar, 2013; Freeman et al., 2020; Laverty, 2015; Museus, 2020; Shields & Reid-Patton, 2009; Zinn & Rodgers, 2012). Therefore, these ideals of returning to the human(e) elements of learning and teaching advocate empathy, compassion, and humanistic standards as pathways to supporting goal achievement and developmental potential.

The advocacy to humanize the lexicon in academia is not a recent phenomenon. Building on the Freirean philosophy of humanism in education, del Carmen Salazar (2013) suggests that by adopting humanization tenets in pedagogical practices and principles, educators can promote a more humanistic world for learners. Within this context, the author posits that by humanizing education, we can help students gain meaningful academic knowledge, evolve their relationship with others, and promote their overall well-being. Similarly, Freeman et al. (2020) posit that humanity is non-negotiable and there is a need to create humanizing spaces for learning and teaching. Notwithstanding the value and significance of embracing humanism in education, there has been limited emphasis on these human(e) dimensions in extant educational discourse. Whilst emphasis have been placed on the hardware and software of teaching and learning practice, the focus on the virtues of its '*heartware*' have been less pronounced. Within the context of this study, the *hardware* in learning and teaching practice relates to educational tools and resources (e.g., teaching and learning technologies and platforms [EdTech tools], learning management systems, learning aids and resources, etc.), while its *software* relates to the pedagogical and instructional design elements (e.g., teaching approaches and best practices, curriculum development, instructional design, content, and assessment, etc.). Conversely, the '*heartware*' of learning and teaching is grounded on the axiological tenets of humanization in education that support the emotional, socio-psychological and well-being of learners (Antoniuk et al., 2021; Hackman & Reindl, 2022; Ignatovitch, 2016; Young, 2020). I acknowledge that in order for learning

and teaching to be successful, all three elements (hardware, software and '*heartware*') must be present. However, for the purpose of this study, the paper focuses on the '*heartware*' dimension of the compassionate teacher. As emphasized in extant discourse adopting humanization and axiological postures in education, humanistic developments and orientations within the education process should be rooted in individual values, sensibilities, and reflections about the social and objective world (Antoniuk et al., 2021; Reza-López et al., 2014; Ignatovitch, 2016). Within this context, the compassionate teacher aims to not only inspire learning journeys that are engaging, positive and fulfilling, but to also foster learning environments that are more equitable, supportive, and conducive for learners of all capabilities and backgrounds.

Preserving compassion, empathy, and kindness in the face of fast academia is challenging. There have been increased criticisms and resistance in recent years towards the consumeristic, marketization of education, academic capitalism, and corporatization and normalization of performativity (Berg & Seeber, 2016; Plust et al., 2021). In an effort to uncover the human(e) elements of learning and teaching, there have been various extant studies on humanizing pedagogies (e.g., del Carman Salazar, 2013; Freeman et al., 2020; Laverty, 2015; Zinn & Rodgers, 2012), diversity and inclusivity in education (e.g., Andresen, 2013; Danowitz & Tuit, 2011; Hershock, 2014; Hiraldo, 2010), mindfulness and Buddhist philosophies in education (e.g., Ergas, 2019; Hyland, 2015; Neves-Pereira et al., 2018; Singh, 2017; Siegel et al., 2016; Vu & Burton, 2019; Wisadavet, 2003), kindness pedagogy and curriculum (e.g., Clegg & Rowland, 2010; Flook et al., 2015; Magnet et al., 2014; Shields & Reid-Patton, 2009; Stephens, 2021), love and compassion in education (e.g., Gorman, 2015; Green, 2003; Jalongo, 2014; Liston, 2016; Robinson-Morris, 2018; Srinivasan, 2014), and storytelling in education (e.g., Allard & Doecke, 2017; Alterio & McDrury, 2003; Bai & Cohen, 2014; Haigh & Hardy, 2011; Savidou, 2010; Tanner, 2016; Taylor, 2013). However, there has yet to be an approach in which the thematic dimensions of: (1) mindfulness and mindsight, (2) attentive love and pedagogical kindness, and (3) storytelling in education is amalgamated in a manner to support positive, engaging, and peaceful learning environments. This paper is conceptual in nature and proposes an approach to humanize the academy through the coaction of mindsight, attentive love, and the teacher storyteller. These overarching themes are discussed in the later discussions, clustered within the three research dimensions of humanization in education. A conceptual framework illustrating these dimensions of '*heartware*' for the compassionate teacher is also proposed.

Literature and thematic dimensions

Mindfulness and mindsight in learning and teaching

The first thematic dimension proposed in constructing the '*heartware*' of the compassionate teacher is mindfulness. The art, science, and practice of mindfulness has had a long history in humanity and is not limited to the sphere of education discourse. In fact, in recent years, mindfulness and mindfulness-based interventions across a myriad of

applications and industries have increased exponentially (Hyland, 2015). Mindfulness has been described as “a way of being” (Srinivasan, 2014, p. 15); a development of our inner nature (Singh, 2017) through being fully present and observing our “physical, emotional, and mental experiences with deliberate, open, and curious attention” (Smalley & Winston, 2010, p.11). Broadly, mindfulness practice depicts the attainment of an intentionally created state of mind (Siegel et al., 2016). In exploring mindfulness practice in education settings, Ergas (2019), proposes the potential for mindfulness practice within three educational orientations: (1) socialization (i.e., serving society and development of future generations), (2) acculturation (i.e., serving culture and domains of human expressions), and (3) individuation (i.e., serving the individual and conditions for self-discovery/actualization). Concurrently, mindfulness practice has been posited to enhance awareness, sustain attention, and regulate emotion, which in turn cultivates the implicit and explicit qualities of care and kindness towards oneself and others (Flook et al., 2015). From an individual perspective, Siegel et al. (2016) outline five independent qualities of mindful traits that may contribute to mindfulness: (1) acting with awareness (in what we are doing, when doing it), (2) being non-judgmental (or accepting), (3) being non-reactive (emotional equilibrium), (4) having the capacity to label our inner world (state of mind), and (5) being able to practice self-observation (from a distance). Regardless of its described characteristics, we must be cognizant that the mindfulness construct is not static, passive or merely inward-looking. It is dynamic and underlies a relational focus of the self and relationships to others. Just as meaningful relationships and connections are fundamental to learning and teaching, so too is how we relate to others.

Before attempting to share mindfulness with others and/or practicing mindfulness in the classroom, we must first pay attention to the present. Fundamentally, this refers to the practice of being in the frame (and acceptance) of the present moment of reality (Hyland, 2015; Siegel, 2009). In this regard, Neves-Pereira et al. (2018) discuss the importance of perception and changing the way we see and perceive the immediate and present reality. Likewise, Vu and Burton (2019) encourage traveling the Buddhist path of “deep transformation of mind and behavior” (p. 2) to reduce and/or eliminate negative toxic mental states. In essence, this introduces the notion of right mindfulness (rather than mindfulness for the sake of mindfulness), based on the conscientious and intellectual understanding of our surroundings to moderate emotions and adjust the self. Espousing Buddhist mindfulness practice, this study similarly considers the notion of right mindfulness as a relational process toward self-transformation, self-contemplation, and critical reflexivity (Ergas, 2019; Vu & Burton, 2019; Wisadavet, 2003). Likewise, Srinivasan (2014) extols the power of right-mindfulness to equip us with the tools to connect authentically, empathetically, and deeply, in order to establish and maintain supportive relationships with learners. Thus, within the context of compassionate teaching, mindful reflectivity and right mindfulness may facilitate transformations of the self and others, based upon the interacting dimensions of moral reflexivity, spiritual practice, and relational acumen.

The above discussions of self-reflectivity, empathy, and the social-relational process highlight the interplay of both internal and interpersonal dimensions within mindfulness practice. In view of this, Siegel (2009) coined the term *mindsight* to describe the human capacity to blend the “seeing of the mind...of the self and of others” (p. 148). Subsequently, Siegel and colleagues (2009, 2016) posit the value of cultivating *mindsight* to widen one’s circle of compassion. They discuss the concepts of mindful awareness, mindful capacity, and *mindsight* as a mentalization process to better view the inner lives of ourselves and others. This notion linking mindfulness to concepts of self-knowing have similarly been discussed in other extant research. For example, Plust et al. (2021) suggest that the capability of self-knowing is a key aspect of becoming an authentic educator since it reflects and represents a genuine way of being. In fact, the authors expanded this conceptualization within the notions of reflective self-awareness, suggesting that the ability to gain self-knowledge, and have a better sense of oneself is strongly associated with positive realizations of meaning in teaching, as well as connections to others. In order to ensure coherence of the various viewpoints and senses of selves, Siegel et al. (2016) propose a *mindsight* map to create the ‘*MWe*’, wherein we “go beyond only ‘*me*’ to connect with ‘*you*’ (and subsequently) become part of a larger ‘*we*’” (p. 4). This differentiates it from traditional mindfulness discourse in that it expands the tenets of mindfulness beyond the ability to merely look inward, and instead advocates the pursuit of interpersonal mindfulness with others in a larger whole. However, mindfulness pursued without love, empathy and reflection is futile. Relationships are also vital in teaching and learning (Srinivasan, 2014). Hence, this study also considers the value of compassion, empathy, and attentive love in education.

Pedagogical kindness: Attentive love and compassionate teaching

Mindfulness practice commonly taps into pathways, affirmations, and contemplations of love as a central theme. Therefore, the second thematic dimension required to construct the ‘*heartware*’ of the compassionate teacher is attentive love. As Liston (2016) suggests, love is a vital affective (emotional) dimension of learning and teaching practice. Therefore, we must understand its complexity, centrality, and capacity in our classrooms. Within the context of the compassionate teacher, the concept of attentive love blends our “cognitive capacity for attention”, and our “human ability to love” (Green, 2003, p. 52) within teaching practice. Similarly, authors have theorized Ruddick’s (1989) notion of attentive love in education, which interweaves feminist pedagogies and the ideals of preservation, nurturance, and acceptability as a means to cultivate inclusive, empowering, and compassionate learning environments (Andresen, 2013; Green, 2003; Liston, 2016; Shields & Reid-Patton, 2009). In this regard, Srinivasan (2014) argues that loving kindness, or leading with love, can humanize and harmonize education. Similarly, Robinson-Morris (2018) highlights that the practice of loving-kindness necessitates the intent, capacity, and ethics to demonstrate care, respect, affection, trust, commitment, and openness to others. In order to humanize the academy, the notion of care has increasingly been

introduced in education discourse as a means to enhance students' well-being through trust, respect, compassion, relations of reciprocity, attentive listening, and mentorship (del Carmen Salazar, 2013). Expanding on the above conceptions, Gorman (2015) proposes a pedagogy of human love for transformative learning, wherein the dimensions of human care, ethics and spirituality are unveiled as the panacea for addressing prevailing educational dysfunction and building a more caring, humanistic world. Within this frame of reference, there have been increased calls for educators to focus on that which makes us human, since humanity is considered non-negotiable in teaching and learning (Freeman et al., 2020; Zinn & Rodgers, 2012). As emotional and social beings, we are inadvertently swayed by the interpersonal aspects of our lives. Therefore, there is value in nurturing a kinder world, where we lead with love. Enacting kindness in our pedagogical and teaching practice is intertwined with extant discourse on love in education. In advocating loving kindness in the classroom, Srinivasan (2014) suggests that before teaching content, teaching is driven by love. The author highlights that in order to create a classroom conducive to learning, we must first cultivate our own "inner sense of boundless love", so that we can welcome our students into a classroom filled with warmth and peace (p. 19). However, just as the tapestry of love is complex and multidimensional, so too is kindness in pedagogical contexts. Notwithstanding the divergent and controversial viewpoints regarding the conceptualization of kindness in education, the discourse relating to pedagogical kindness and kindness curriculum has significantly expanded within humanistic models of pedagogy (Clegg & Rowland, 2010; Gorman, 2015; Liston, 2016; Magnet et al., 2014; Museus, 2020). Shields and Reid-Patton (2009) posit that kindness is a cornerstone for teaching and learning, and is the basis for understanding care, compassion, and respect in curriculum. Concurrently, Stephens (2021) proposes a pedagogy of kindness, wherein compassion, belief and trust become the foundations to empower and transform teacher-student relationships. Compassionate teachers who are oriented toward a humanizing pedagogy develop trusting, respectful, and caring relationships with their students and peers (Antoniuk et al., 2021; del Carmen Salazar, 2013). Therefore, to be compassionate educators, we must constantly engage in humanizing, educative practices that facilitate positive and safe spaces for learning and teaching; and wherein the voice of the individual is validated. At the core of educational discourse relating to humanizing pedagogies, the focus on the voice, stories, and legacies of the individual and humanity is vital (Zinn & Rodger, 2012). Accordingly, sharing of stories and experiences – our own and those of others we hold on to, allows us to affectively learn, grow and connect with others.

Storytelling in education: Open our hearts to open minds

The third thematic dimension required to construct the '*heartware*' of the compassionate teacher is the telling and interpreting of stories. Storytelling is an inherent human condition (Haigh & Hardy, 2010; Shank, 2006). As Zinn and Rodgers (2012) suggest, humankind was not created in silence. The gathering, telling and interpretation of stories is powerful and humanizing, since collectively shared thematic

narratives enable shared experiences, sense-making, and praxis. Within this context, the telling, sharing, and retelling of stories encourages a better awareness of the self and others, and provides insights for transformation where knowledge is constructed and reconstructed (Taylor, 2013). Therefore, stories are valuable because it directly gives meaning to experiences; and experiences are important in education since humans understand and make sense of their reality and perspectives through such experiences (Tanner, 2016; Haigh & Hardy, 2010). Concurrently, Savvidou (2010) highlights the capacity for storytelling to facilitate dialogue, personal development and empower individual expressions. This notion of stories and their power as a vehicle for voice and encouraging dialogue, has been widely discussed in extant educational discourse relating to humanizing pedagogies. For example, Srinivasan (2014) stresses the importance of actively engaging learners in dialogue to genuinely understand them. Similarly, O'Neill (2014) suggests the need for teachers to reconnect through dialogue and spaciousness, where we once again recenter our classrooms as safe and positive spaces for authentic dialogical exchange, stimulating imagination, creative exploration, and human flourishing. Within this context, dialogue is considered "essential to a praxis that is both humanizing and full of love" (Freeman et al., 2020, p. 97). As Alterio and McDrury (2003) suggest, teachers and learners may learn from (and share) experiences throughout their lives, and such experiences shared through stories can have the potential to facilitate learning in creative, enjoyable, and meaningful ways. Consequently, our own values, experiences, and identities as a previous student, teacher and human-being are involved in knowledge creation, wherein our inherent emotionality and subjectivity of personal experiences and narratives provide richness, context, and authenticity to the learning.

The concept of the authentic self has been debated and discussed from a myriad of social-psychological perspectives. To be an authentic teacher, we have to live what we teach (Abdelmotagally, 2015). Discussing this within the context of mindfulness and authentic presence, Srinivasan (2014) emphasizes the need for teachers to "teach who we are" and convey "our way of being" to our students (p. 43). Accordingly, storytelling (of our own stories and experiences) helps us to provide encouragement and direction in a manner that is authentic, relational and inspires. Within the higher education context, Butler-Henderson and Crawford (2020) posit that authentic leadership behaviors demonstrated by teachers can motivate and influence positive learning outcomes through sincere knowledge-sharing, trust and engagement. In espousing teacher authenticity within the context of contemporary education environments, Plust et al. (2021) posit that the authentic teacher is someone who encapsulates four key characteristics: (1) Congruence (i.e., being genuinely oneself, self-knowing, defined self-identity, and responsibility for one's actions); (2) Caring (i.e., care, passion and interest for the subject, students and oneself); (3) Openness to encounters (i.e., authentic relationships and meaningful dialogic interactions); and (4) Being critically conscious (i.e., reflective self-awareness and being a critically reflexive practitioner). Within the context of storytelling and the use of narratives to facilitate learning, the legitimization of stories in learning and teaching presents rich narratives

from which authentic experiences are recognized and understood within the educational process (Tanner, 2016). In view of this, authenticity in teaching and the effective use of storytelling can help to describe salient characteristics of the teacher storyteller.

The teacher storyteller seeks to harness the power of stories as a transformative pedagogic tool. Just as storytellers aim to draw in and engage listeners, the teacher storyteller interweaves storytelling as a dynamic, reflective learning tool in their classroom. Within the context of storytelling in education, Haigh and Hardy (2010) discuss the benefits of stories as valuable teaching tools for organizing learning, developing core skills, and encouraging group identification and connection with peers. Concurrently, Bai and Cohen (2014) highlight the value and contribution of storytelling towards individual learning, enlightenment, and transformations. Through immersing and engaging with an imaginative story-world, we may be prompted to consider different ways of seeing and being in the world. As Savvidou (2010) suggests, storytelling is inherently dialogic. Thus, whenever a story is told it provokes a response. Therefore, the use of storytelling in educational settings can also support critical reflective learning (Alterio & McDrury, 2003; Savvidou, 2010). Likewise, Taylor (2013) observes the impact of life-stories on thoughts, beliefs, and actions, particularly when engaged in critical reflection and dialogue. Within the context of learning and teaching outcomes, storytelling helps us to organize our thoughts, emotions and actions in a complex, unordered world (Shank, 2006). Storytelling thus arises from the interaction between people and their circumstances, as they attempt to understand their experiences and make sense of their actions. Within this context, narratives play a central function in helping learners to make meaning, interpret and organize experiences (Allard & Doecke, 2017). Stories therefore help to create meaningful, authentic learning spaces. Correspondingly, Plust et al. (2021) advocate the significance of an authentic teacher's ability to exemplify the genuine care, passion, interest, and personal connection with the subjects they are teaching, their students and their own personal experiences. In this regard, del Carmen Salazar (2013) suggests that educators who are able to authentically connect with their students on an emotional level and provide reciprocal opportunities to share their lives, challenges and affirmations can help to fully develop their human potential (i.e., beyond just academic development and technical training). Essentially, in order to open minds, we must first open hearts. Stories help us to do so by constructively linking emotions, meaning and sense-making with understanding, knowledge, and reflection.

Discussion and conclusion

"Love is that condition in the human spirit so profound that it allows me to survive, and better than that, to thrive with passion, compassion, and style" - Maya Angelou

The above quote by Maya Angelou (Douglas, 2016) aptly highlights the theme of this paper and its aim to put forth an approach to humanize the academy in the face of an ever-increasing fast academia. Consequently, it focuses on the

human(e) elements of learning and teaching, such as love, empathy, kindness, and compassion. After all, we are not just teachers and students. We are human beings, bound to other human beings through the bonds of association and humanity. As del Carmen Salazar (2013) shares, "humanization is the ontological vocation of human beings" (p.37) and it is our process of becoming. It drives the way we engage, experience, and participate in and with the world, and fully realize who we are as humanity, individually and collectively. Despite increased recent calls to humanize the academy, predominant extant educational discourse has focused on the hardware and software of teaching and learning practice. In contrast, this study focuses on the 'heartware' dimensions characterizing the compassionate teacher. Based on the literature reviewed, I suggest the coaction of three key thematic dimensions to humanize the academy: (1) mindsight and mindfulness, (2) attentive love and pedagogical kindness, and (3) storytelling and the teacher storyteller. The proposed conceptual framework for the compassionate teacher (Figure 1) illustrates three interacting thematic dimensions which are amalgamated to support positive, engaging, and productive learning environments. These three dimensions are sequentially organized based on the processes of (1) thinking it, (2) telling/sharing it, and (3) showing/feeling it.

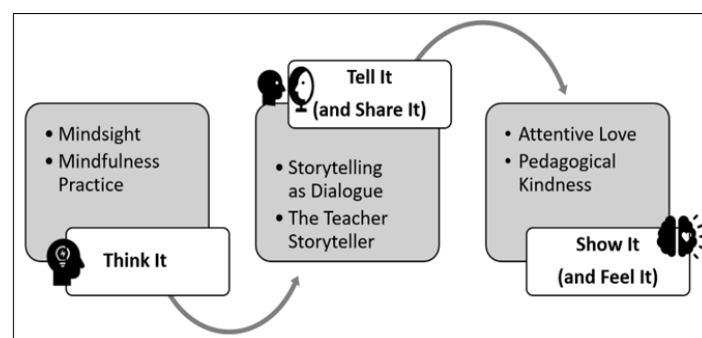


Figure 1: 'Heartware' for the compassionate teacher: A conceptual framework.

The first thematic dimension in the framework (*Think It*) relates to the cognitive and intellectual notions of mindfulness and mindsight. As discussed, mindfulness practice entails the attainment of an intentionally created state of mind and present-moment awareness. In essence, to be a mindful compassionate teacher, we must endeavor to manage our attention, acceptance, and perceptions about our present moments of reality in the classroom (Hyland, 2015; Neves-Pereira et al., 2018). Within the context of mindfulness practice in educational settings, Ergas (2019) posits that the ethos of mindfulness can potentially be channeled to serve individuals (individuation), societies (socialization), and cultures (acculturation). Expanding upon conventional mindfulness discourse, Seigel et al. (2016) extended the tenets of mindfulness to include the pursuit of interpersonal mindfulness with others in a larger whole. Consequently, the authors posit that cultivating right-mindfulness and mindsight within this context can help to break down self-limiting barriers, achieve emotional equilibrium and improve our capacity to better perceive ourselves and others. Furthermore, Flook et al.'s (2015) study on the application of a mindfulness-based kindness curriculum in early

childhood education observes increased learning indicators and outcomes for nurturing self-regulatory abilities, socio-emotional competence, and prosocial skills development. Accordingly, Seigel (2009) asserts that to create a more compassionate, kinder world, we have to work together to build a more humanistic world, imbued with better attuned relationships and reflective practices. This notion of uniting love, kindness and mindfulness in teaching practice and the classroom can help the compassionate teacher to cultivate mindful energy and awareness in every interaction, so that our classrooms can be transformed into spaces and learning communities of peace, compassion, and inclusivity.

The second thematic dimension in the framework (*Tell It/Share It*) articulates the value of storytelling in compassionate teaching. Relatedly, it also emphasizes dialogic interactions, narratives and stories as being central to supporting trust, respect, and authentic relationships. The compassionate teacher humanizes the academy by creating a safe and positive learning environment in which students are able to openly debate ideas, share experiences and engage in the meaning making process. In this manner, compassionate teachers are able to build genuine relationships, engage in meaningful dialogues and strengthen their bonds with their students (and peers) within a collegial, supportive, non-judgmental space (Plust et al., 2021). Concurrently, interactions and social learning cultivated from storytelling have also been discussed as tools for collaborative learning, collegiality and collective deliberations through shared narratives and dialogue (Allard & Doecke, 2017; Savvidou, 2010; Shank, 2006; Tanner, 2016). As Haigh and Hardy (2010) emphasizes, storytelling is inherent to the human experience. It is also a fundamental means to transmit knowledge, skills and educate. Storytelling constitutes a practical understanding, an innate impulse to mediate representations of individual experiences and actions. In this sense, the teacher storyteller utilizes stories and shared narratives to create authentic connections and encourage meaningful dialogue. Subsequently, reflective learning and mindful reflexivity enables a transformative process to strengthen the foci and/or sense of self, relationships with others and engagement with the learning processes.

Meaningful dialogue cannot exist in the absence of love, compassion, and empathy. As Freeman et al. (2020) emphasizes, critical inquiry and reflection is inherently dialogic, and without the profoundness and infusion of love, there can be no proper dialogue. Therefore, the final (and possibly the most critical) element characterizing the compassionate teacher is the act of love. This thematic dimension (*Show It/Feel It*) emphasizes the significance of demonstrating attentive love, kindness, and its importance within compassionate teaching. Teaching is a vocation which requires us to come forth with genuine care and an ethic of love to share knowledge, attentive understanding, and loving engagements (Liston, 2016; Robinson-Morris, 2018). Espousing the tenets of kindness pedagogy, this thematic dimension supports the development of authentic relationships (showing and feeling) in order to build trust, respect, and dignity. As highlighted by Plust et al. (2021), authentic compassionate teachers in particular are able to genuinely show care and concern for their students, driven by a desire to encourage and value their students' flourishing.

Through adopting an axiological approach in teaching and learning, the student becomes the main focal point and of the highest value (Antoniuk et al., 2021). In order to genuinely care for our students, we must first be interested in, and care about what is important to them. To do this, we must know our students, and they must know us. If we are able to achieve this, we may be able to then have this genuine care and concern reciprocated, wherein students would perceive the teachers' caring attitude as being genuine. As Srinivasan (2014) observes, a learning environment devoid of authentic, heartfelt interaction, regardless of its instructional design and soundness, could never create a connected, innovative, and loving, compassionate teaching space. Therefore, the compassionate teacher must actively practice intentional present-moment awareness, genuine listening, and curiosity without judgement.

This conceptual paper investigated the key dimensions required to humanize the academy. Specifically, it explores the key co-acting human(e) elements of mindsight, attentive love, and the teacher storyteller. These three dimensions were thematically integrated in a proposed conceptual framework to illustrate the human(e) '*heartware*' elements of the compassionate teacher (Figure 1). The aim was not merely to just review and discuss the broad socio-psychological and emotional elements of humanistic engagement and learning. Rather, it hopes to provide a practical, usable framework for applying the key principles and dimensions for becoming a compassionate teacher. Whilst there is no empirical data collected at this stage of the study, the results of the literature review and preliminary analysis of my own teaching reflections and feedback offers support for further exploration, and opportunity to expand and assess the applicability of this framework empirically. I acknowledge that the scope of literature and preliminary research covered in this paper is not a definitive collection or generalization of all works related to humanizing the academy and compassionate teaching. Nor does it aim to draw elaborate conclusions from these observations. Nonetheless, I believe that it presents valuable insights into the current issues, challenges, and discourse within the topic area. In light of the above discussions, it appears apparent that future research into the realms of compassionate teaching and pedagogical kindness is worthwhile. In the next stage of research, the study will apply the framework to empirical data collected from related communities of practice, as well as relevant student cohorts. This data can provide in-depth insights on compassionate teaching from both the learning and teaching perspectives, as well as provide feedback for further applications in humanizing the academy and our classrooms. Additionally, there are also opportunities to further develop and adapt this conceptual framework to other forms of humanization in education.

To be a compassionate, inclusive, and mindful educator, it is important for us to be authentic in the positioning of our teaching values and interactions. This is strengthened when it is expressly ingrained into to our own positionality as an educator, researcher, and fellow human being. As Srinivasan (2014) shares, the best way we can encourage and share mindfulness with our students is by ensuring our own authentic presence. In other words, we *must* be what we teach. Paradoxically, the compassionate teacher is perceived

to be a contradiction to prevailing dominant institutional metrics and expectations of professionalism, performance, and efficiency in academia (O'Neill, 2014; Magnet et al. 2014; Plust et al., 2021). Despite the challenges and controversies, we cannot ignore the need for building a more human(e) centric educational environment. Through developing mindfulness, attentive love, and storytelling, I hope that we, as compassionate teachers, can achieve better mindful awareness, reflect upon our values as educators, and practice care ethics for our students and peers. I am cognizant that my journey and the determination of likeminded educators to envision ways in which we can better humanize academia would not be one that is easily travelled. The prevalent neoliberal tenets and logic that envelops us in the current educational environment will not be easily discarded. As Freeman et al. (2020, p.86) concedes, to successfully engage in humanizing practices in learning and teaching requires us to "grapple with notions of impossibility". Nonetheless, I hope that as more educators and education administrators embrace the 'heartware' of learning and teaching, we can in time, create educational environments that value learning and teaching outcomes from other perspectives beyond rigid standardized assessments, metrics and judgements. I would like to end here with Maya Angelou's invitation and inspiration for us to "be a rainbow in someone's cloud" (Douglas, 2016). I hope that this paper and its simple approach showcasing the 'heartware' of learning and teaching will help to inspire others to journey with me to improve our compassionate teaching practice. We should take pride, respect, and responsibility for the work we do as teachers, mentors, and human beings; and to create a kinder, more compassionate educational environment for our students and the next generation of humanity. To be a rainbow in their cloud.

References

- Abdelmotagally, N .F. (2015). Moving beyond limits: The educational path in Maya Angelou's collected auto(edu) biographies. *CEA Critic: An Official Journal of the College English Association*, 77(1), 82-96.
- Allard, A. C., & Doecke, B. (2017). Telling tales: The value of storytelling for early career teachers. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 25(2), 279-291.
- Alterio, M., & McDrury, J. (2003). *Learning through storytelling in higher education: Using reflection and experience to improve learning*. Sterling, VA: Routledge.
- Andresen, R. (2013). Visions of what inclusive education can be—With emphasis on kindergartens. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 21(3), 392-406.
- Antoniuk, V. Z., Alendar, N. I., Bartkiv, O. S., Honcharuk, O. V., & Durmanenko, O. L. (2021). Axiological approach in professional pedagogical education. *Linguistics and Culture Review*, 5(S4), 687-699.
- Bai, H., & Cohen, A. (2014). Zen and the art of storytelling. *Studies in philosophy and education*, 33(6), 597-608.
- Berg, M., & Seeber, B. K. (2016). *The slow professor: Challenging the culture of speed in the academy*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Butler-Henderson, K., & Crawford, J. (2020). Digitally empowered students through teacher leadership: The role of authentic leadership. *Journal of Applied Learning and Teaching*, 3(1), 88-96.
- Clegg, S., & Rowland, S. (2013). Kindness in pedagogical practice and academic life. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 31(6), 719-735.
- Danowitz, M. A., & Tuitt, F. (2011). Enacting inclusivity through engaged pedagogy: A higher education perspective. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 44(1), 40-56.
- del Carmen Salazar, M. (2013). A humanizing pedagogy: Reinventing the principles and practice of education as a journey toward liberation. *Review of Research in Education*, 37(1), 121-148.
- Douglas, A. A. (2016). *928 Maya Angelou Quotes*. CreateSpace.
- Ergas, O. (2019). Education and mindfulness practice: Exploring a dialog between two traditions. *Mindfulness*, 10(8), 1489-1501.
- Flook, L., Goldberg, S. B., Pinger, L., & Davidson, R. J. (2015). Promoting prosocial behavior and self-regulatory skills in preschool children through a mindfulness-based kindness curriculum. *Developmental Psychology*, 51(1), 44-51.
- Freeman, Q., Flores, R., Garzón, D., Gumina, D., Sambolín Morales, A. N., Silva Diaz, E., & Stamatis, K. M. (2020). Collaborating towards humanizing pedagogies: Culture circles in teacher educator preparation. *The New Educator*, 16(1), 86-100.
- Gorman, J. (2015). What's love got to do with transformative education. *Journal of Sustainability Education*, 9, 1-14.
- Green, F.J. (2003). What's love got to do with it? A personal reflection on the role of maternal love in feminist teaching. *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement*, 5(2), 47-56.
- Hackman, S. T., & Reindl, S. (2022). Challenging EdTech: Towards a more inclusive, accessible and purposeful version of EdTech. *Knowledge Cultures*, 10(1), 7-21.
- Haigh, C., & Hardy, P. (2011). Tell me a story—a conceptual exploration of storytelling in healthcare education. *Nurse Education Today*, 31(4), 408-411.
- Hershock, P. D. (2015). Valuing diversity: Buddhist reflections on equity and education. *ASIANetwork Exchange*, 22(1), 1-11.
- Hiraldo, P. (2010). The role of critical race theory in higher education. *The Vermont Connection*, 31(1), 53-59.
- Hyland, T. (2015). On the contemporary applications of mindfulness: Some implications for education. *Journal of*

Ignatovitch, A. (2016). Humanization of the learning process in higher educational institutions. *Social Behavior Research Practice Open Journal*, 1(2), 5-7.

Jalongo, M. R. (Ed.). (2014). *Teaching compassion: Humane education in early childhood*. Springer.

Laverty, M. J. (2015). There is no substitute for a sense of reality: Humanizing the humanities. *Educational Theory*, 65(6), 635-654.

Liston, D. P. (2016). On attentive love in education: The case of courage to teach. In K. A. Schonert-Reichl & R. W. Roeser (Eds.). *Handbook of mindfulness in education* (pp. 221-235). Springer.

Magnet, S., Mason, C. L., & Trevenen, K. (2014). Feminism, pedagogy, and the politics of kindness. *Feminist Teacher*, 25(1), 1-22.

Museus, S. D. (2020). Humanizing scholarly resistance: Toward greater solidarity in social justice advocacy within the neoliberal academy. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 33(2), 140-150.

Neves-Pereira, M. S., Carvalho, M. A. B. D., & Aspesi, C. D. C. (2018). Mindfulness and Buddhism: Contributions of Buddhist philosophical and religious teachings to the fields of psychology and education. *Gifted Education International*, 34(2), 144-154.

O'Neill, M. (2014). The slow university: Work, time and well-being. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 15(3), 1-20.

Plust, U., Murphy, D., & Joseph, S. (2021). A systematic review and metasynthesis of qualitative research into teachers' authenticity. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 51(3), 301-325.

Reza-López, E., Huerta Charles, L., & Reyes, L. V. (2014). Nepantlera pedagogy: An axiological posture for preparing critically conscious teachers in the borderlands. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 13(2), 107-119.

Robinson-Morris, D. W. (2019). Radical love,(r) evolutionary becoming: Creating an ethic of love in the realm of education through Buddhism and Ubuntu. *The Urban Review*, 51(1), 26-45.

Ruddick, S. (1989). *Maternal thinking: Toward a politics of peace*. Beacon Press.

Savvidou, C. (2010). Storytelling as dialogue: How teachers construct professional knowledge. *Teachers and Teaching:*

Shields, C., & Reid-Patton, V. (2009). A curriculum of kindness: (Re) creating and nurturing heart and mind through teaching and learning. *Brock Education Journal*, 18(2), 4-15.

Siegel, D. J. (2009). Mindful awareness, mindsight, and neural integration. *The Humanistic Psychologist*, 37(2), 137.

Siegel, D. J., Siegel, M. W., & Parker, S. C. (2016). Internal education and the roots of resilience: Relationships and reflection as the new R's of education. In K. A. Schonert-Reichl & R. W. Roeser (Eds.). *Handbook of mindfulness in education* (pp. 47-63). Springer.

Singh, S. (2017). Implications of Buddhist philosophy for moral education. *Deliberative Research*, 34(1), 100-103.

Smalley, S. L., & Winston, D. (2010). *Fully present: The science, art, and practice of mindfulness*. Da Capo Press.

Stephens, L. E. (2021). More than students... a pedagogy of kindness. *SCHOLE: A Journal of Leisure Studies and Recreation Education*, 1-2. 10.1080/1937156X.2021.1986434.

Srinivasan, M. (2014). *Teach, breathe, learn: Mindfulness in and out of the classroom*. Parallax Press.

Tanner, S. J. (2016). Storying the classroom: Storytelling and teacher evaluation. *English Teaching: Practice & Critique*, 15(2), 208-220.

Taylor, L. (2013). Lived childhood experiences: Collective storytelling for teacher professional learning and social change. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 38(3), 9-16.

Vu, M. C., & Burton, N. (2020). Mindful reflexivity: Unpacking the process of transformative learning in mindfulness and discernment. *Management Learning*, 51(2), 207-226.

Wisadavet, W. (2003). The Buddhist philosophy of education approaches and problems. *The Chulalongkorn Journal of Buddhist Studies*, 2(2), 1-60.

Young, P. A. (2020). *Human specialization in design and technology: The current wave for learning, culture, industry and beyond*. Routledge.

Zinn, D., & Rodgers, C. (2012). A humanizing pedagogy: Getting beneath the rhetoric. *Perspectives in Education*, 30(4), 76-87.