

# RESEARCH ABSTRACT

Findings From a Six Month Inquiry into Questions of Lifelong Learning

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**Background** The adult education landscape struggles to find renewed purpose and relevancy amid society's rapidly changing relationship to information availability, skill acquisition and the needs of the contemporary individual. How might an embodied "anthroposophy," or awareness of one's humanness, illuminate new forms for lifelong learning and aid in a renaissance of the objectives, practices and assessments of higher education?

**Foundation** Humanity's wisdom traditions teach that a personal experience of divine wholeness provides the necessary framework to discern more clearly the harmonious health (and the imbalanced illness) of self and society. That this ability for self diagnosis can be improved and trained was taken as a foundational assertion of this research.

**Methodology** Based on Dr. Rudolf Steiner's (1861-1925) conception of the human as a being of three parts - thinking, feeling and the will to action, this inquiry followed a research protocol that sought to include all three without prejudicing one aspect over another.

**Example** A weekly "Open Studio Session" life-lesson cast the action researcher in each of the three roles of the historic guild learning structure. The Master is a teacher who has thoroughly penetrated the subject matter with their thinking, an Apprentice is a student engaged in carrying out experiential education, and the Journeyman occupies a middle realm of prototyping methods based on a felt balance between one's still-developing vision for a project and accumulated best practices for practical applications.

**Findings** Preliminary findings confirm that new capacities of perception can and do develop where individual imagination, interest and initiative meets an open platform for such education.

**Recommendations** An educational philosophy holding human wisdom and not the accumulation of knowledge as its goal will be successful to the degree that it makes real an authentic experience of the threefold nature of the human being. A world conception constructed on the interrelationship of three equal aspects to reality naturally overcomes the divide between opposing fields and helps heal a one-sidedness, whether manifested inwardly or outwardly.

**Example** The fields where humans look for life education are rarely treated as three integral spheres. Art, science and religion are each necessary for an accurate experience of the whole. The natural scientific method with its disciplined observation and verifiable protocols can and should be employed in the inner development of the religious traditions. Inversely, spiritual disciplines offer methods of contemplative inquiry that expand the otherwise limited cosmology of the physical sciences. And all educational fields, whether seeking knowledge of the physical, spiritual, inner or outer, all must be situated in genuinely creative learning communities that take the life of the human soul seriously.