Graduate Book Review

A Whole New Mind by Daniel Pink

Lori Welty

Touro University California, School of Education

**Graduate Book Review**

**Introduction**

Daniel Pink provides a profound analysis of the economic and social changes brought on by technology and globalization. He presents a powerful and convincing case of how these changes will affect our lives in the 21st century.

**Background & Discussion**

America has been driven by jobs based on knowledge and the ability to analyze. These jobs provided by lawyers, accountants and software engineers will no longer dominate the work force. The positions requiring analytical, left-brained talent are now being outsourced or replaced by technology. The future belongs to a different kind of person, a person with right-brained traits such as the capacity to detect patterns, identify opportunities, create artistic products, and understand human interactions. The new careers may include: creator, designer, to the Conceptual Age with a global economy where innovative services will be needed to solve problems. Essentially, the career traits of the left-brain thinker will be replaced by the traits of the right-brained thinker. Although the left- and right-brain work together in harmony, Pink establishes the theory that individuals with enhanced right-brain traits will dominate the work place. Employers will be more interested in hiring individuals with MFA’s (Master’s in Fine Arts) versus MBA’s (Master’s of Business Administration) just as they will become more interested in individuals with high EQ (emotional quotient) versus IQ (intellectual quotient). Daniel Pink establishes the six essential abilities that will be needed to be successful during the Conceptual Age. Those six abilities include design, story, symphony, empathy, play and meaning. One must be able to design something that is beautiful, whimsical, or emotionally engaging which goes beyond the basics of design. Creating a story on a given set of facts adds an element of emotion. Having the ability to persuade, communicate and create a compelling narrative supports this new era. The ability to synthesis and put the ideas together in a creative manner is identified as Symphony. Also, seeing the big picture and being able to support and direct others is an element of Symphony. Empathy is needed to forge relationships and understand the thought processes of others when designing products or caring for individuals. Incorporating a sense of play into work through laughter, games, and humor is needed in for healthy living. He argues that we need to make meaning of our lives during this Conceptual Age focusing less on accumulation and more on pursuit of desires and personal fulfillment.

**Recommendations**

As educators, we need to assimilate this information and determine the best approach in educating our children to meet the demands of our ever-changing globalized society. We must begin by moving from teacher directed instruction to learner-centered instruction. As Tony Wagner identifies in Creating Innovators, students are motivated to grow when they have a purpose and passion for learning. Given voice and choice, the top two motivating factors for students today, we must allow them to engage in projects that provide meaning and purpose. Students should have the opportunity to explore areas of interest within the parameters set by the teacher. Through engagement in project based learning, students should be encouraged to collaborate as they ask questions, explore and solve problems. When their knowledge is communicated to an authentic audience, they need to ensure support for the global community. This approach to instruction supports Pink’s statements made in the video, “The Puzzle of Motivation.” He focuses on the importance of giving students autonomy throughout the learning process while allowing them to explore topics that support a sense of purpose.

Schools and districts are working to develop an educational system that supports the Conceptual Age, however, the focus on creativity seems to be a mystery and challenge to implement and assess. Given my experiences in implementing an arts integration program, I’ve discovered that creativity occurs when we instruction is based on activities requiring right-brained applications. The brain is a complex system with many facets that need to be developed. Based on work by Sebastian Seung, the structure and function of neural circuits in the brain are altered by our actions. Given this theory, we should be providing students with opportunities to explore and create. One challenge in this endeavor is that teachers may be apprehensive about providing these experiences. As the staff at Salvador have become more proficient and focused on identifying ways to incorporate art based skills and strategies into their units of instruction, they have reaped the benefits as they observe students engaged and thinking creatively. Through these experiences, students collaborate in partners or groups with a final presentation to an authentic audience.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, Daniel Pink validates the significance of the transformation at Salvador. The merit in his message enhances passion and support of creativity in education and instruction for the Conceptual Age. This master’s program has inspired me to continue learning and supporting project based learning through 21st century instruction. It is imperative that we inspire our students to develop a sense of passion and purpose as they learn and pursue their dreams.

**References**

Pink, Daniel (2006). *A Whole New Mind.* Riverhead Books. New York.

Pink, Daniel. *The Surprising Science of Motivation.* Retrieved from

[http://www.ted.com/talks/dan\_pink­\_on\_motivation.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/dan_pink_on_motivation.html).

Seung, Sebastian. *I am my Connectome.*  Retrieved from <http://youtu.be/HA7GwKXfJB0>.

Wagner, Tony (200). *Creating Innovators.*