Chapter 8

Morfosis Educational Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

Early in the 21st Century it became obvious that the world has developed in multiple and complex directions which resulted in the pressing demand of a different type of citizen. Many of the previously well-established principles and values are under examination, and oftentimes are explicitly challenged. Any K-12 academic institution that holds as a central belief that knowledge is individually and socially constructed by learners who are active observers of the world, active questioners, agile problem posers and critical and creative problem solvers, must design, implement and promote an educational philosophy that mirrors the needs described above. This chapter discusses a new educational philosophy (Morfosis) that has been adopted by ACS Athens over the past decade. Morfosis is defined within the 21st Century framework, as a holistic, meaningful, and harmonious educational experience, guided by ethos. The chapter also advances the concept of successful vs. significant institutions, and shares recommendations on how to establish a culture that promotes and establishes the latter.

INTRODUCTION

Building a different type of education that relates to a new world is the focus of the Morfosis Educational Philosophy. Complex societal changes, and globalization, have resulted in the pressing of a different type of citizen. People need to live, work, develop, and seek happiness locally but under a global influence. As a result of this, many of the previously well-established principles and values are questioned, examined and oftentimes explicitly challenged. The development and nurturing of the new local or global individual must include the acquisition of different competencies, the mastering of new skills, the operation with a more complex set of rules, the feeling of the pressure to protect the environment, and being compassion-
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ate about fellow citizens who might reside on a different continent. This has become an urgent matter to be dealt with simply because with the changing of the workplace and the new requirements needed for employment (local as well as world-wide), there is an urgent need to re-think not only who we teach at all levels, but also how we manage and lead our schools and educational institutions. This in turn shapes and re-shapes both the local and global communities. The traditional approach to schooling, teaching, and managing educational institutions has been a one-dimensional affair with the top-down leadership approach to both educating and managing. This approach, as well as the philosophy in which the approach is rooted, lacks certain elements of our new and changing world, and thus students are not fully prepared to live, work, develop and seek happiness under a global influence. So the questions become: how do we prepare young people for such a demanding life? What kind of an educational experience should they receive? And, what are the appropriate universal principles and values guiding their actions, personally and professionally, in a rapidly changing local and global world?

These questions are accumulated experientially to include: curriculum, learning objectives, desired faculty characteristics, who defines these principles and values, how learning and the desirable qualities of educated people are assessed, the kind of leadership that is most effective, the kind of professional development that is necessary to bring out the best in teachers, and many others.

To answer some of these questions we need to engage the minds of students, staff, faculty, administration, and parents and friends of academic institutions underlining a commitment to serve the family, the community, the nation, and the world. Thus, as there is growing awareness of the need for educational reform, a concern that has drawn the attention of government and non-government agencies across the globe, the quest for higher standards and better student outcomes is becoming more and more a focal point. To guide our quest for such a journey, we need to ensure that all students and those who teach them and take care of them obtain a desirable educational experience which is, as defined by Pelonis and Gialamas (2009), the complete learning experience obtained from students’ academic, physical, spiritual and civic responsibilities. Therefore, a new educational philosophy based on the Complete Learning Experience is urgently needed to prepare young people to become tomorrow’s leaders with ethos to make the world a better place to live for the benefit of all people. This new educational philosophy is called the Morfosis Educational Philosophy (from the Greek Μόρφωση).

MORFOSIS EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

For the past ten years, at ACS Athens, this new educational philosophy has been introduced, implemented, modified, and finally crystallized to address the new realities of a global society with all of its challenges, new expectations, and unforeseen opportunities. This educational philosophy is part of the Global Morfosis Educational Paradigm (gMp), and within the 21st Century framework, it is defined as a holistic, meaningful, and harmonious educational experience, guided by ethos.

Morfosis Educational Characteristics

- **Holistic:** Understanding and successfully combining the academic, emotional, physical, intellectual and ethical components to ensure a healthy, balanced individual- an individual who will successfully cope with the changes involved when entering higher education as well as the changes that life brings.