Becoming Wise by Kindling of the Flame with Wisdom Pedagogy in Higher Education

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DOI: 10.21549/NTNY.49.2025.2.1

The next paradigm change in human history will be the shift from the knowledge society towards the wise society where the role of education in cultivating wisdom of students becomes essential. This conceptual paper asks: How does wisdom evolve and how can its development be taught? The research method is based on critical realism research philosophy, abductive theory building approach. Data is collected with a critical integrative literature review. This paper highlights trends in wisdom research and in higher education. Its purposes are to create a framework of becoming wise, and to present a possible process of wisdom pedagogy. The study revealed that wisdom in higher education has been neglected for a long time. The paper makes creative and novel theoretical contributions to the field of evolutionary wisdom pedagogy. It calls for testing the proposed process in live teaching situations and continuing the discourse around wisdom pedagogy in higher education.

Keywords: Becoming wise, Wisdom pedagogy, Emancipatory pedagogy, Higher education, Anthropocene, Body-mind-spirit, Wisdom

Education is the kindling of a flame,
not the filling of a vessel.
~ Socrates ~

Introduction

Since the late 18th century, human societies have undergone four significant paradigm shifts primarily driven by industrial revolutions. This paper argues that after the Age of Reason (Enlightenment), the Age of Technology, and the Age of Knowledge, the Age of Wisdom will emerge. This will be the next paradigm change in human history. Many scholars (Banerjee, 2014; Dobson, 2010; Goede, 2011; Ekmekçi et al., 2014; Müürsepp, 2013, 2021; Nonaka et al., 2014; Stebbins, 2017) argue that recently we live in the knowledge or creative economy, but we are slowly moving towards the wisdom economy and towards the wise society where human wisdom will play a decisive role. They claim that the wise society will be dominated by wise organisations, wise leaders, and wise people.Therefore, in the 21st century, in a wisdom economy and a wise society, there will be a huge need for human wisdom. Wisdom or *prudence* is a leading human virtue. This paper focuses on the role of higher education in fostering wisdom skills of students.

This topic is important because we face significant and global problems that require solutions. In the long run, humanity will face extreme weather events, biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse, critical change to

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Earth systems, natural resources shortages, misinformation and disinformation, adverse outcomes of AI technologies, inequality, societal polarisation, cyber espionage and warfare, and pollution (W. E. F., 2025, p. 8). We live in the Anthropocene era, when humans significantly and negatively affect our planet's ecosystems and climate. This clearly shows a shift towards environmental crises in the long run, which will be the main challenge for humanity to survive. The most recent OECD report on global megatrends shaping education highlights that "the future of education is shaped by a myriad of economic, social, demographic, and technological trends. The last few years have seen significant global crises, including a rise in armed conflict and mounting geopolitical tensions, which have implications for public spending, international migration, global health, and national policy priorities" (OECD, 2025, p. 3). In our increasingly fragmented world, inequality and polarisation are on the rise. Education needs to address involuntary migration, income inequality, gender inequality, mental distress, political polarisation, and rapid technological developments. Therefore, many authors (Karami et al., 2020; Karami & Parra-Martinez, 2021; Maxwell, 2012, 2014; Sternberg & Karami, 2021) emphasise that wisdom has become more important than ever due to the global problems facing our society. Solé (2017, pp. 55–61) argues that wisdom is a higher degree of knowledge, that makes it possible to act wisely. In the Anthropocene era, there would be a need for wise people to make wise judgments, to act wisely, and to apply their knowledge wisely.

Consequently, the question of whether wisdom can be taught becomes a priority in 21st-century education. This, however, is not a new question in the history of humanity. To illustrate the ongoing debate about the teachability of virtues, excellence, and wisdom let us recall the debate between the sophist teacher, Protagoras (490 – 420 BC) and the wisest man of his age, Socrates (470 – 399 BC) about whether excellence is teachable or not (Plato, 1892, XVII, 309a–362a). Socrates believed that "the wisest and most excellent of our citizens are unable to pass on this excellence, which they possess, to anyone else" (319e). He added, "I can recount a whole range of other examples of those who are themselves good, but have never yet made someone else good; either a member of their own family or someone from outside it. So, Protagoras, when I look at all this, I come to the view that excellence cannot be taught" (320b). However, Protagoras argued that excellence and virtues can be taught to children by their parents and to students by their teachers. He asked: "Now when so much attention is paid to excellence, privately and publicly, are you really surprised, Socrates, and puzzled as to whether excellence can be taught? But there is no cause for surprise, no; there would be much more cause for surprise if it could not be taught" (326e). Socrates disagreed and argued that excellence, such as respect and justice, cannot be taught or transmitted to our children or students because virtues emerge in action and practice. For Socrates, excellence comprised five things such as wisdom, sound-mindedness, courage, justice, and holiness (349b). He claimed that "knowledge is the food of the soul" (313) and "you cannot buy the wares of knowledge and carry them away in another vessel; when you have paid for them you must receive them into the soul and go your way" (314). Socrates was against of purchasing knowledge and learning and he argued that "Learning, by contrast, cannot be borne away in a separate vessel. No, once the fee has been proffered, it is necessary to take that learning into the soul itself, and once you have learned something, you must go your way, having been either harmed or benefitted thereby" (314b). Socrates also believed that everyone is capable of becoming virtuous; therefore, becoming a good citizen is possible for everyone (344c). However, he claimed that wisdom, as a guiding virtue, cannot be taught, but rather how to become wise can be fostered through knowledge. This paper seeks a pedagogy to foster the wisdom skills of students.

To conclude, both Socrates, and Protagoras, were right but they were only half right each. Socrates was right that "everything that belongs to man (*sic*) depends on prudence" (Plato, 2005), he claimed that wisdom determines our souls, body, and mind. Protagoras was right that excellence, virtues, wisdom can be taught. Rayan (2014) argues that the difference between Socrates and Protagoras lies in their distinct conceptions of knowledge, teaching, and education. On the one hand, Socrates argued that teaching is mainly instructions (*didakticos*), and it focuses on the content knowledge (311b–312e). Therefore, it requires that the instructor fully knows the subject being taught, and because there is no clear knowledge of what virtue is, it cannot be taught (319b). Protagoras, on the other hand, thought that teaching is education *(paideia*) that focuses on methodology (pedagogy) and not on the content, therefore, without exact knowledge what virtue is it can be taught (323d–325b). The debate about education, learning, and knowledge has continued throughout history. In the 1950s, Russell maintained that "the world needs wisdom as it has never needed it before, and if knowledge continues to increase, the world will need wisdom in the future even more than it does now" (Russell, 1956, p. 177). We agree with the philosopher Russell (1956, pp. 175–176), who maintained that wisdom can not only be taught but teaching wisdom should be one of the aims of education. This paper argues that '*becoming wise*' is a process that can be enhanced by education and pedagogy. How students make judgments based on their thinking and feelings, how students act, and how they know can be cultivated, fostered by wisdom pedagogy.

Over the last four decades, we have witnessed exponential growth in wisdom research across several disciplines, including psychology, sociology, organisational studies, human resources management, strategy, leadership, and management (Bachmann et al., 2018). Nevertheless, wisdom research in education has been neglected for a very long time. In higher education wisdom has started to receive more attention only since the early 2000s (Ardelt & Bruya, 2020; Bruya & Ardelt, 2018a, 2018b; Diamond, 2021; Gidley, 2012; Grossmann & Kung, 2019; Hashim et al., 2014; Henderson & Kesson, 2001; Jakubik, 2020a, 2020b, 2021, 2022a, 2022b, 2022c, 2023; Maxwell, 2012, 2014, 2021a, 2021b; Nylander, 2015; Sternberg, 2001; Yusoffi et al., 2018). Nevertheless, according to Diamond, there are still only a "few modern scholars focus their research efforts on understanding how an individual human comes to apprehend something like wisdom and examining how it can be taught, seeking a solution to the question of whether it is possible to teach the development of wisdom (pedagogy), what might be its constituent parts (curriculum), and if yes, then how to develop wisdom in the current era" (Diamond, 2021, pp. 9–10). We believe there is a need for contributions and exploration of how wisdom can be taught.

The role of education and higher education in developing students' wisdom has become a central topic in the 21st century (Maxwell, 2014). Concurring with Maxwell (2012, 2021a), universities will play a decisive role in educating students who could successfully tackle global problems. This paper focuses on the role of higher education when transitioning from the knowledge society to the wise society (Goede, 2011). Therefore, it seeks to address an important problem by answering the research question: How does wisdom evolve, *and how can its development be taught?* The purpose of this paper is to contribute to the evolutionary, developmental theories of wisdom by proposing the model of *becoming wise*. This paper is based on a multidisciplinary approach that combines philosophical, psychological, and educational viewpoints on wisdom. Education, which involves the development of knowledge, understanding, and intelligence, enables wise actions and judgments, which are highly related to the development of wisdom. Our extensive experience in higher education also drives our interest in this topic.

The paper has four sections. The introduction presents why the research problem and question of this paper are important in the context of humanity facing global challenges and moving towards a wise society.

The Method and Concepts section describes the research approach, research question, objectives, and it introduces the theoretical framework. It also explains the key concepts of the theoretical framework. The Results section presents the framework of *becoming wise*, and the process of wisdom pedagogy. The Discussion and Conclusion section highlights the main trends in wisdom research and higher education, justifying the need for contributions from this study. It also answers the main research question by presenting the key findings. It concludes, and based on the limitations of this study, it outlines the further research areas.

Method and Concepts

The research design is based on the critical realism research philosophy and an abductive theory-building approach. Critical realism is appropriate for this conceptual paper because it "involves a switch from epistemology to ontology, and within ontology a switch from events to mechanisms. … the point of departure in critical realism is that the world is structured, differentiated, stratified and changing" (Danermark et al., 2005, p. 5). The abductive approach is selected because its fundamental idea is "To interpret and reconceptualise individual phenomena within a conceptual framework or a set of ideas. To be able to understand something in a new way by observing and interpreting this something in a new conceptual framework" (Danermark et al., 2005, p. 80). Data is collected with a critical integrative literature review of the most relevant and significant theories of wisdom. The critical review demonstrates the evolution of the concept and theory of wisdom and raises questions about their possible further development. An integrative review pinpoints the paradoxes, highlights different and diverse views, and debates about wisdom, with the aim of synthesising, reconceptualising, and creating a new evolutionary framework of 'becoming wise' through wisdom pedagogy.

The main research question is: *How does wisdom evolve and how can its development be taught?* The objectives are (1) to explore the key concepts related to wisdom; (2) to develop a framework for '*becoming wise*'; and (3) to present the process of wisdom pedagogy as an evolutionary pedagogy of HE. The theoretical framework is presented in figure 1. The three main concepts are: (1) Anthropocene as a real, complex, interconnected, and an emerging context (place, space, and time); (2) body, mind, and spirit; and (3) wisdom.

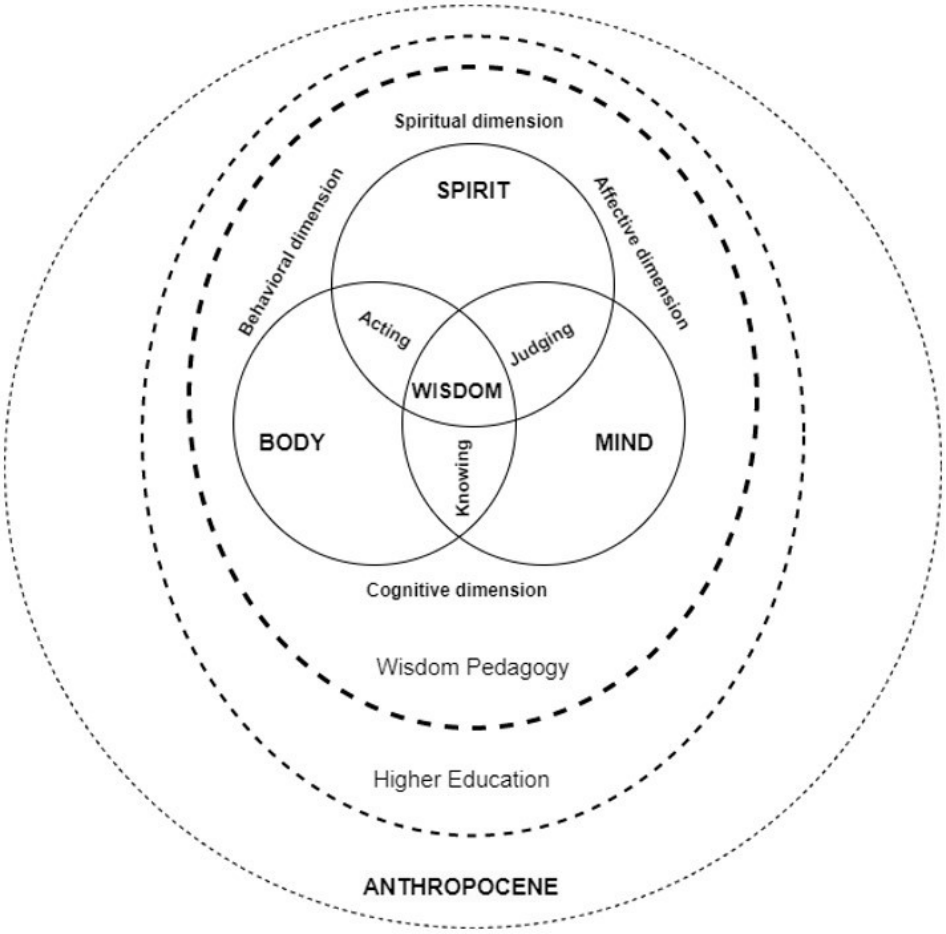

Figure 1. Theoretical framework

Anthropocene

We live in the Anthropocene era. This era is characterised by constant change. It emerges in time, it is instable, interconnected, and complex. The Anthropocene, as a complex open system, encompasses both the non-living world (i.e., mountains, rivers, floods, earthquakes, tsunamis) and the living world (i.e., animals, humans). There is a constant interrelationship, interconnectedness, and interdependency between the forces of the living and non-living worlds. The impacts of this interrelationship can be both positive and negative. Positive outcomes, for example, include when humans save the environment and save animals from extinction. Negative impacts, for example, include pollution of the environment and exploitation of natural resources (Maxwell, 2012, 2014, 2021a; W.E.F., 2024, p. 8). Unfortunately, the Anthropocene era is characterised by more negative than positive direct impacts of humans on the world, including humanity itself.

Barnett argues that even the concept of Anthropocene is a debated concept but "it is central to the philosophy of higher education; indeed, perhaps the most important concept to the field" (Barnett, 2022, pp. 234). Like Maxwell (2012, 2014, 2021b), Barnett also points out the role and the responsibility of the university as a knowledge producer in impacting the Anthropocene, and "in the raising of awareness of issues and the development of a new sensitivity to the world" (Barnett, 2022, p. 235). Universities are integral parts of the Anthropocene ecosystems. To address this challenge of higher education requires changes in

curriculum, a shift in the focus of university pedagogy, and a move towards wisdom-inquiry. This calls for more wisdom in human thinking, actions, and judgments (Maxwell, 2012, 2014).

Body-Mind-Spirit

Since Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle there has been an ongoing debate about human knowledge, human intelligence, and the relationship of body and mind. As we illustrated in the Introduction with the debate between Protagoras and Socrates, Socrates argued that wisdom and soul, spirit are inseparable from humans. Plato believed that desire, emotion, and knowledge guide human behavior: "Desire, appetite, impulse, instinct – these are one; emotion, spirit, ambition, courage – these are one; knowledge, thought, intellect, reason – these are one" (Durant, 1954, p. 22).

The theoretical framework (figure 1) presents the interrelation of body, mind, and spirit. This unity and interrelatedness are vastly discussed in philosophy and psychology. How human knowledge develops is presented in the '*becoming to know*' model of Jakubik (2011a, p. 391; 2011b, p. 61). The model illustrates how ontological and epistemological chains are interconnected in a specific context and time. Intellect arises when learning and knowing interact during the '*becoming to know*' process. The French philosopher, Henri-Louis Bergson (1859 – 1941) also emphasised the evolutionary character of human intellect: "the beauty of the human intellect development is that it is in a constant flux, it is evolving and becoming during the whole life" (Russell, 1954, p. 822). Human intellect is formed during these dynamic processes, when perceptions, conceptions, and judgments interact (Goleman, 1996; Kahneman, 2011). The driver of the development of something new is this interplay between the external and internal worlds.

Knowledge develops through perceptions of the human body, as we sense and experience different stimuli, data, and information from both living and non-living environments. However, because 'perceptions without cognitions are blind', as the German philosopher, Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804) argued, there is a need for sense-making, thoughts by mind. These thoughts are expressed in the form of theory, concepts, ideas, mostly in explicit knowledge.

There is a need also for spiritual knowledge related to human existence, aspirations, and motivation. Bratianu (2015) argues that spiritual knowledge contains possible answers for questions concerning our existence in society, on Earth, and in the Universe; it gives life or vitality to persons' existence; it embraces our deepest sense of existence; it reflects the essence of any human aspiration and the kernel of any strategic thinking, and it embraces our living aspirations and motivations. He also sees a tight connection between spiritual knowledge and values, ethics, decisions, and actions.

Wisdom

Wisdom, like justice, fortitude, temperance, and courage, is a human virtue. Wisdom as a concept has been studied in various disciplines, including philosophy, history and culture, theology, anthropology, biology, neurobiology, psychology, and education. However, Ardelt concludes that "a generally agreed-upon definition of wisdom does not yet exist" (Ardelt, 2004, p. 258). Wisdom is a complex and multidimensional concept. Therefore, it is natural that it has several definitions:

1. Jeste et al. (2010, p. 668) write that wisdom can be learned, it increases with age, it is measurable, and wisdom is "uniquely human; a form of advanced cognitive and emotional development that is experience-driven".

2. Sternberg argues that “wisdom involves forming a judgment when there are competing interests that lack resolution” (Lopez et al., 2015, p. 229). According to Sternberg, “knowledge, judicial thinking style, personality, motivation, and environmental context precede wisdom” (ibid. p. 232).
3. Baltes and Staudinger (2000, p. 124) define wisdom as “an expertise in conduct and meaning of life”, as the “ways and means of planning, managing, and understanding a good life”. They also claim that “fluid intelligence, creativity, openness to experience, psychological-mindedness and general life experiences ‘orchestrate’ to produce wisdom” (Lopez et al., 2015, p. 232).
4. Erikson (1959) believed that wisdom is gained through resolving daily crises, and it builds knowledge, cognitive skills, and personality characteristics, requiring an understanding of a cultural context.

Maxwell takes a broader perspective on wisdom and argues that the primary goal of wisdom is to achieve the common good, from which not only the individual but also the whole community and society would benefit. Wisdom becomes increasingly important in time of global crises (Maxwell, 2012, 2014, 2021a; W.E.F., 2023).

Ardelt (2004, p. 275) defines cognitive dimension as an “understanding of life and a desire to know the truth, i.e., to comprehend the significance and deeper meaning of phenomena and events, particularly with regard to intrapersonal and interpersonal matters. It includes knowledge and acceptance of the positive and negative aspects of human nature, of the inherent limits of knowledge, and of life’s unpredictability and uncertainties”. She defines reflective as a “perception of phenomena and events from multiple perspectives requires self-examination, self-awareness and self-insight”. According to her, the affective dimension of wisdom means being sympathetic and having compassionate love for others. Bassett’s (2005, 2011) wisdom model has four elements (i.e., cognitive, affective, active, and reflective).

Bangen et al. (2013) argue that the “most commonly included subcomponents, which appeared in more than half of the 24 wisdom definitions are (1) social decision making and pragmatic knowledge of life, which relates to social reasoning, ability to give good advice, life knowledge, and life skills; (2) prosocial attitudes and behaviours, which include empathy, compassion, warmth, altruism, and a sense of fairness; (3) reflection and self-understanding, which relates to introspection, insight, intuition, and self-knowledge and awareness; (4) acknowledgement of and coping effectively with uncertainty; and (5) emotional homeostasis, which relates to affect regulation and self-control” (Bangen et al., 2013, p. 1256).

According to Sternberg and Karami (2021), the six Ps of wisdom are “the (a) Purpose of wisdom, (b) environmental/situational Press that produce wisdom, (c) nature of Problems requiring wisdom, (d) cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and conative (motivational) aspects of Persons who are wise, (e) psychological Processes underlying wisdom, and (f) Products of wisdom” (Sternberg & Karami, 2021, p. 4). They also note that purpose is an important drive of wisdom (Sternberg & Karami, 2021, pp. 6-8).

Results

Becoming wise framework

How does wisdom evolve? This is the first part of the main research question this paper seeks to answer. The wisdom of a person develops throughout their life, spanning the phases of infancy, childhood, adulthood, and old age. Figure 2 illustrates the lifespan wisdom evolution framework. It shows the shifts from absorption and assimilation (i.e., engaging) of data and information through experience, sensation, and perception of the body towards dissemination and sharing of knowledge and wisdom through conception and reflection of the mind.

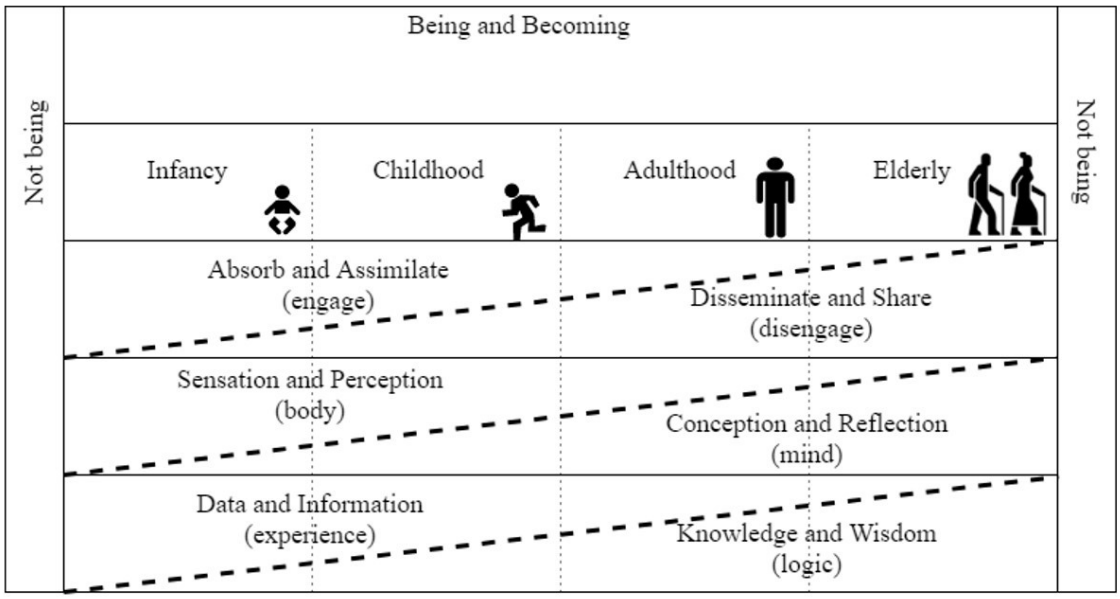

Figure 2. Becoming wise framework

Psychologists (e.g., Ardelt, 2010; Baltes & Carstensen, 2003; Smith & Baltes, 1990) study if an individual becomes wiser with age. Ardelt (2010), applying her three-dimensional wisdom scale, examined if old adults are wiser than college students. She concludes that older adults showed higher levels of wisdom on affective and reflective dimensions than college students. Wisdom may grow with age, as we become wiser through learning from our life experiences. Baltes and Carstensen (2003) argue that understanding the behavioural, cognitive, and motivational processes is crucial in the ageing process. In their research, they realised that with age people become more focused and selective in their goals. They call it 'selective optimisation with compensation'. Smith and Baltes (1990) examine five criteria of wisdom, including factual knowledge, procedural knowledge, life-span contextualism, relativism, and the recognition and management of uncertainty in different age groups (young adults, middle-aged, and elderly). They conclude that wisdom is distributed equally across age groups. Like Ardelt (2010), they also argue that the cognitive dimension of wisdom originates from a person's specific life experiences.

Building on the findings from the literature, the Becoming Wise framework (Figure 2) illustrates the lifespan evolutionary character of wisdom. It brings together concepts of 'be', 'being', and 'becoming'. Being in a certain period of life is characterised by a certain interplay of body and mind. For example, in the stage of infancy, the child's mind (conception), knowledge, and wisdom develop by bodily engaging and reflecting on the stimuli from the living (family members) and non-living environment (toys, food), through sensing and perceiving (i.e., seeing, touching, tasting, hearing, feeling) data, information.

The limitation of this framework is that it does not demonstrate how morals, values, ethics, and spiritual knowledge influence a person's actions, thinking, and judgments. Furthermore, the role of the environment and education in evolution of personal wisdom is hidden in this framework.

Wisdom pedagogy process

How can the development of wisdom be taught? This is the second part of the main research question this paper seeks to answer. The focus here is on pedagogy. The aim is not teaching 'wisdom' as such but to develop wise knowing, wise judging, and wise actions (i.e., wisdom skills) in persons, which means supporting the *becoming wise* journey of students.

Wisdom pedagogy aims to educate not only to teach. The goal of education is more than just instructing students, passing on information and existing knowledge to them, asking them to memorise data, facts, and content what the teacher provides, and then in the exam, answer the question as the teacher taught. Indeed, as Socrates believed, *"Education is the kindling of a flame, not the filling of a vessel"*. Similarly, later Plutarch (40 – 120 AD) in his *Moralia* also expressed similar thoughts about education when he wrote: *"For the mind does not require filling like a bottle, but rather, like wood, it only requires kindling to create in it an impulse to think independently and an ardent desire for the truth"* (Plutarch, 1927, p. 259). Indeed, education is more than just passing on existing knowledge to students. The teacher's role in education is *kindling of the flame*, increase interest, curiosity of students, develop not only their mind, critical thinking, skills, but the whole person (body-mind-spirit), to prepare them for dealing with uncertainty and complexity in a moral and ethical way. Therefore, wisdom pedagogy in higher education needs to focus on four key dimensions, including cognitive, behavioural, affective, and spiritual dimensions (cf. Figure 1).

Learning for a highly uncertain and unknown world requires a curriculum and pedagogy that focus not only on "understanding (knowledge), acting (skills) and being (self)" but also on a pedagogy that prepares students for the uncertainties of life. Barnett argues that a pedagogy for uncertainties is one that engages the self and fosters human emancipation. He writes "*This* pedagogy allows for human flourishing as such" (Barnett, 2015, p. 230, emphasis original). According to Barnett, a pedagogy for uncertainties also needs a language a "for risk, uncertainty and transformation of human being itself calls for imagination" (Barnett, 2015, p. 231). In this pedagogy "openness of the pedagogical frames is not just epistemological, but it is also ontological in nature. The students come to know each other as individuals; and to a degree, they also come to know their teachers as people. This is unbridled openness of the pedagogical frame" (Barnett, 2015, p. 232). Barnett (2015, p. 228) claims that the no risk pedagogical options are: (1) educational development pedagogy of 'disciplinary initiation' where knowledge field is established and given; and (2) an educational transformative pedagogy for 'generic skills' where fixed ontologies are for an unknown world. The high-risk pedagogical options are educational development as a 'disciplinary wonder,' where knowledge is uncertain and changes over time, and (2) educational transformation pedagogy of 'human being as such,' where ontologies are open to an unknown world.

As wisdom has no general definition (Ardelt, 2004, p. 258), wisdom pedagogy also lacks a general definition. However, we have good knowledge about how wisdom evolves, develops, we also know what characteristics, dimensions wisdom has (e.g., Ardelt, 2003, 2004; Bangen et al., 2013; Bassett, 2005, 2011; Sternberg, 2001, 2012; Sternberg & Karami, 2021). The role of education in becoming wise is critical. The traditional teaching method (didactic) is teacher-oriented and content-focused. The didactic triangle consists of three main elements: teacher, students, and the content. Both teachers and students need to be engaged in the learning process. The traditional didactic triangle needs to be transformed (Miyamoto, 2022). The role of teacher is important in cultivating students' emancipation, "the obligations for teachers involved in higher education is not only to further and reproduce the current mass of knowledge and cultures, but also to create room for the individual's *Bildung*" (Magnússon & Rytzler, 2022, p. 75). The teacher needs to focus on the

students' personal growth process and not on the content; i.e., the focus should be on kindling the flame rather than filling a vessel. Magnússon and Rytzler (2022) argue that emancipatory teaching is: a lived event of equal learners (teacher and students); a discourse of connecting different worlds; forming a community of interest where every voice can be heard and listen to (Magnússon & Rytzler, 2022, p. 87). They refer to Säfström (2011) arguing that "being a teacher with emancipatory interest has to do with being critical against one's own function in the institutional logic of explanation, and being open for the opinions, views, and experiences that students bring into the practice of teaching" (Magnússon & Rytzler, 2022, p. 86).

Emancipatory knowing, i.e., *lifeworld becoming*, according to Barnett (1994), has the following characteristics: (1) Reflective knowing – accepts multiple knowledge to understand the world better; (2) Open-ended situations – able to take up alternative perspectives; (3) Focuses on dialogue and arguments; (4) Transferability – a metacritique state of mind, attitude of 'passionate skepticism' helping personal emancipation; (5) Meta-learning – lifelong learning, a willingness critically to examine one's learning, learning from mistakes, learning about oneself; (6) Dialogical communication; (7) Consensus – dialogical communication, constant seeking for truth, values, ethics, sensitivity to people and nature; (8) Value orientation – common good defined based on open dialogue and consensus; (9) Movable boundary conditions – capability to operate in the world, widening the conditions of discourse, practicality of discourse; and (10) Critique – aiming to improve our understanding, aiming to understand ourselves (Barnett, 1994, 178-185).

Wisdom pedagogy, as an emerging stream of wisdom research in higher education, is situated within the paradigm of educationalisation (Magnússon & Rytzler, 2022, pp. 15-31). This is the view that focuses on developing future citizens (Jakubik, 2020a, 2020b). The role of education is emphasised in solving global social and political problems (Jakubik, 2022a). Furthermore, wisdom pedagogy has a strong emancipatory and relational character, it educates for life (Jakubik, 2022b), it educates for being in the world, it cares for *life-world becoming* of students (Jakubik, 2023), it facilitates the better understanding of the world around us, and it helps to provide possible solutions to the global challenges of the world (Maxwell, 2012; W. E. F., 2025). Figure 3 illustrates the possible '*becoming wise*' process with wisdom pedagogy, showing the impact of education on the evolution of personal wisdom through wisdom pedagogy.

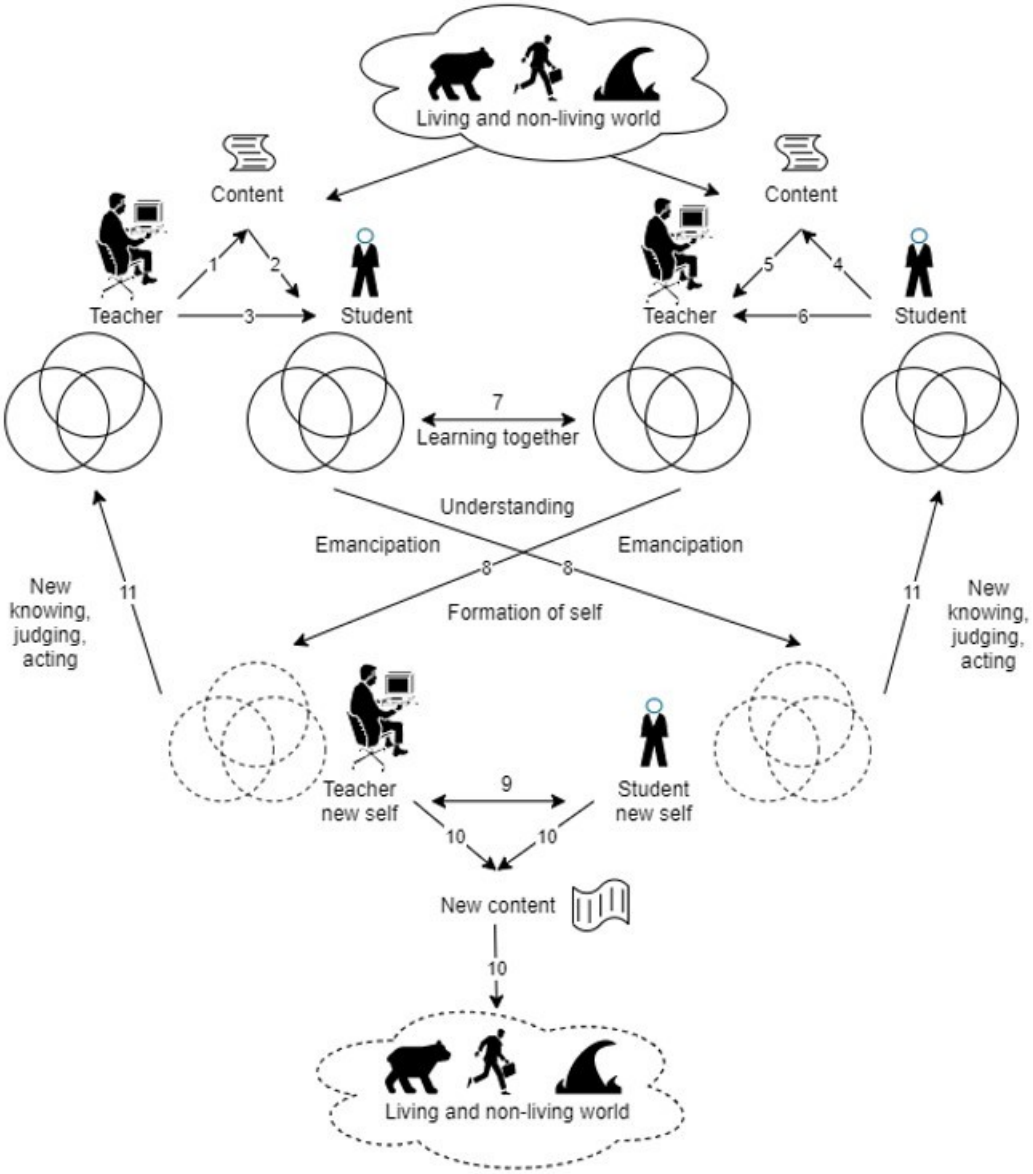

Figure 3. Wisdom pedagogy process

The key steps in the wisdom pedagogy process are: (1) The teacher selects a meaningful topic, a significant problem from the living and non-living world to focus on in teaching situation (cognitive dimension). (2) The teacher presents the topic and content to the students. (3) The goal of the teacher is to engage students (kindling of the flame) in the topic selected by him/her (affective dimension). (4) The students select a meaningful and important topic from the living and non-living world (cognitive dimension). (5) The students present the topic to the teacher. (6) The goal of students is to engage the teacher in the topic selected by them (affective dimension). (7) Both the teacher and the students are engaged in the learning together process of exploring, questioning, criticising, and understanding the content of their meaningful topic (cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions). This is a learning community where teachers and students are equal in debate and discussions. (8) As a result of the learning together process, the formation of self is happening. This is an emancipatory process. It means that all participants (teachers and students) will develop their wisdom, including wise knowing, wise judging, and wise acting, based on their moral and ethical values, authenticity, responsibility, personality, and

attitude (spiritual dimension). (9) Interactions of the new selves of teacher and students. (10) The result of the interactions of new selves will create a new understanding of the topic, phenomena they both selected and discussed. This new knowledge of the topic will be transmitted, applied, acted upon in the living and non-living world (behavioural dimension). (11) The Becoming wise process continues, and the old self is replaced by a wiser, new self that is more ready to face the uncertainties of the world.

As both Socrates and Plutarch argued, emancipatory education (Biesta, 2015b, 2017; Freire, 1970; Jakubik, 2023; Magnússon & Rytzler, 2022; Nouri & Sajjadi, 2014) is not about *filling of a vessel*, it is not about transferring knowledge from the teacher to the students. Teachers are not the only owners of knowledge; teachers and students are equal practitioners in the knowledge creation process where they are all learners. This paper argues that the role of the teacher in emancipatory education is to kindle the flame through wisdom pedagogy, building trust, motivating students, increasing their curiosity and criticality, and forming their individual identity.

Discussion and Conclusion

Trends in wisdom research

Since the 1980s, wisdom research has begun to flourish (Bachmann et al., 2018). Wisdom researchers and research groups from different disciplines, not only theoretically but empirically too, explored the concept and created their theories. Lopez et al. (2015, pp. 224–237) discuss two distinguished streams of theories of wisdom.

The *implicit theories* of wisdom focus on non-observable, psychological features of the concept of wisdom. Researchers explored, for example, the three dimensions of wisdom, i.e., affective, reflective, and cognitive (Clayton, 1975); six qualities of wisdom, i.e., reasoning, sagacity, learning, judgment, quick use of information, and perspicacity (Sternberg, 1985); three conceptualisations of wisdom, i.e., *sophia*, *episteme*, and *phronesis* (Robinson, 1990); meanings of wisdom (Baltes, 1993); features of wisdom (Jeste et al., 2010); characteristics of a wise person (Ardelt, 2004; Glück et al., 2012); cultural context and wisdom (Sternberg, 2012).

The *explicit theories* of wisdom focus on more observable, behavioural, and performance characteristics of wisdom. Their pragmatic approach is grounded in earlier theories, including personality theories, cognitive development theories, stage theories, and life-span theories. According to Lopez et al. (2003, pp. 228–231), in this group of theories, two main theories emphasise the organisation and application of pragmatic knowledge: (1) the balance theory of wisdom (Sternberg, 1985, 1990, 1998); and (2) the Berlin Wisdom Paradigm (BWP) (Baltes & Smith, 1990; Baltes & Staudinger, 1993, 2000; Staudinger & Baltes, 1994). The balance theory emphasises a person's moral decisions, utilising their practical intelligence when facing real-life problems, personal values, and the role of context in making wise decisions, and striving to achieve the common good through the suggested solution. The Berlin Wisdom Paradigm, proposed by researchers of the Max Planck Institute (PMI), focuses on expertise in wise performance. It emphasises that an expert considers their specific life situation and context, as well as the cultural and social values of others, and recognises and manages uncertainties through flexible thinking when proposing pragmatic solutions to problems. Ardelt (2004) strongly opposes the view advocated by the Berlin group researchers that focuses on expertise and experts' knowledge in defining wisdom. She writes, "I argue that the term 'wisdom' should be reserved for wise persons rather than expert knowledge" (Ardelt, 2003, p. 281).

From the above discussion, it seems that while the two main groups of researchers acknowledge the contributions of others, they also criticise each other at the same time. They have valid arguments in their

oppositions. We acknowledge that researchers of implicit and explicit theories of wisdom have made enormous theoretical and experimental contributions to wisdom research. However, as further advancements are made, it is necessary to consider integrating these two main streams of research. This paper could be the first small step toward this direction by proposing the '*becoming wise*' framework. Like the views that implicit (i.e., tacit) and explicit knowledge cannot exist without each other (Polanyi, 1962, 1966), there should not be a dichotomy between implicit and explicit theories of wisdom either. Others also noticed the need for an integrative definition of wisdom. Bangen and colleagues (2003, p. 1263) in their extensive literature review of wisdom theories suggest "*Establishing the generalizability of definitions and measures of wisdom*" (emphasis in original) as a possible further research topic. Similarly, Ardelt (2003) proposes further research on the definition, operationalisation, and measurement of wisdom.

From the literature study, we also discovered that wisdom theories, on the one hand, focus on identifying, describing, and measuring the personal characteristics of a wise person, specifically who a wise person is and what it means to *be* wise (e.g., Ardelt, 2003). On the other hand, wisdom theories aim to identify the wise behavioural *outcomes* of an expert's action and performance (e.g., PMI researchers). This paper argues that there should be more emphasis on *how* wisdom evolves, on the spiritual dimension of wisdom, on the drives of knowing, judging, and acting, and on the process of '*becoming wise*' compared with a focus on *being wise*. Therefore, there is a need to propose an evolutionary model of wisdom (figure 2).

Trends in higher education

Education has a significant impact on the development of a person's knowledge and wisdom. This paper focuses on HE. The discussion begins with the shifting paradigms in higher education, followed by the role of the university in HE (Maxwell, 2014, 2021b), and the need for new pedagogical approaches in HE.

Marketisation, corporatisation, standardisation, outcome-oriented rationality, massification, and internationalisation are the major trends in higher education. According to Magnússon and Rytzler (2022, pp. 15-31), the instrumental view of HE causes several problems. They argue that currently there are four main views, shifting paradigms dominate in HE, namely: (1) shifts from public good to private good (university degrees increasing employability of individuals, individuals benefitting from HE, universities introducing fees); (2) commodification, marketisation, massification, and juridification of HE (knowledge as commodity, individuals as products, degrees can be bought, teachers are managers); (3) learnification, i.e., shift towards learning, learning outcomes, and new roles of teachers as learning process facilitators (Biesta, 2015a, 2015b, 2017), and (4) paradigm of educationalisation of political and social problems such as reactions to: global problems and crises; social inequality; exclusion; injustice; political censorship of media and freedom of speech; institutional autonomy of universities; limiting freedom of academic and cultural expression and research; ethnicities; gender inequality, and so on.

Higher education has started to play an increasingly significant role in addressing political and social problems (Barnett, 2011; Jakubik, 2022a; Maxwell, 2012, 2021a; W.E.F., 2024) within societies. Universities are integral parts of society. Barnett (2011) argues that the 'developmental university' is "both active in the world and is generating knowledge through those activities in the world. It is intent on helping to improve the world – its knowledges are put to work for-the-world" (Barnett, 2011, pp. 31–32). University is a place for acquiring new knowledge and a space for debate and reasoning. Therefore, a university is more than just a place for learning. It is a place and space "where students and teachers gathered around topics of interests, and which required a more sophisticated conception of knowledge production than simply 'learning'"

(Magnússon & Rytzler, 2022, p. 27). The university is influenced by, and at the same time, influences its ecosystems (Barnett, 2022, p. 240).

What university is a highly debated topic. Magnússon and Rytzler (2022) write that:

> … the university can be understood as a specific way of arranging, teaching, and researching knowledge, that in a way extends the function of an adult generation that gradually introduces the world to the young.
>
> … higher education extends the opportunities for students, teachers, and researchers to explore and to take part of this world. This is done by slowing down, zooming in, opening up a place for critical thinking, for wonder and for curiosity. (Magnússon & Rytzler, 2022, p. 81).

Therefore, universities have an educational and pedagogical role in society. Russell was critical toward education of his time and he thought that education "has not had time to affect profoundly our ways of thinking and our public life … we are still primitive in methods and technique; we think of education as a transmission of certain body of settled knowledge, when it should be rather the development of a scientific habit of mind" (Durant, 1954, p. 483). The 'educationalisation' paradigm of HE increases the need for a pedagogy that has an emancipatory and a relational character to the living and non-living world (figure 3). This pedagogy needs to foster students' emancipation, both their being in the world and becoming of the world (Magnússon & Rytzler, 2022).

The three main goals of emancipatory pedagogy (i.e., critical pedagogy, liberatory pedagogy) are "humanisation, critical conscientisation, and the establishment of a problem-posing education system." (Nouri & Sajjadi, 2014, pp. 78-79). Building on Freire (1970), Nouri and Sajjadi argue that humanisation needs love, humility, faith, trust, hope, and critical thinking. Critical conscientisation is strongly related to authentic learning through dialogues between teachers and students about meaningful global problems of the living and non-living world. Establishing a problem-posing education system requires a change in the relationship between teacher and students.

There are needs for contributions in HE in developing and applying a pedagogy that prepares students for the unknown and uncertain world. Concurring with Diamond (2021, p. 9–10), we argue that a better understanding is needed of (1) how wisdom develops in individuals; (2) whether it is possible to teach wisdom (Russell, 1956, pp. 175–176); and (3) with what pedagogy can wisdom be taught. Long-neglected wisdom research in education needs more attention. Since the 2000s, numerous wisdom pedagogy models have emerged (Bruya & Ardelt, 2018a, 2018b), and they require reconceptualisation. Furthermore, a better understanding of wisdom pedagogy would need more attention. Finally, the practical impacts of applying wisdom pedagogy need to be studied.

Conclusion

The main research question asked: *How does wisdom evolve and how can its development be taught?* The objectives were (1) to explore the concepts related to wisdom; (2) to develop a framework for '*becoming wise*'; (3) to present the process of wisdom pedagogy.

Firstly, to answer the research question, we introduced the need for wisdom when humanity faces urgent and global problems, and when it experiences a paradigm shift from the knowledge society to the wise society. We presented the theoretical framework (figure 1), the proposed framework of '*becoming wise*' (figure 2), and the process of wisdom pedagogy (figure 3).

The findings indicated that:

1. In the era of Anthropocene, we need wise people to act wisely, make judgments wisely, and apply their knowledge wisely. To answer the global challenge of humanity (W. E. F., 2025), and to manage the paradigm shift to a wise society there is a need for more wisdom in human thinking, actions, and judgments. HE and the university as integral parts of the ecosystem, require changes in curriculum, and in the focus of university pedagogy (Barnett, 2022; Maxwell, 2012, 2014, 2021a, 2021b).
2. Concurring with philosophers, this paper argues for the unity of body, mind, and spirit (Goleman, 1996; Kahneman, 2011). Knowing, judging, and acting together contribute to wisdom and at the same time they are guided by wisdom.
3. Wisdom has no single general definition; rather, it can be defined by its attributes (Ardelt, 2003, 2004; Bangen et al., 2013; Bassett, 2005, 2011; Sternberg, 2001, 2012; Sternberg & Karami, 2021).

Secondly, the paper asked: *How does wisdom evolve?* Based on the findings from wisdom research literature, the framework of *becoming wise* (figure 2) was presented. Thirdly, the paper asked: *How can development of wisdom be taught?* Based on the findings from HE literature, the possible steps in wisdom pedagogy process were described (figure 3). The main conclusions are:

1. Wisdom theories appeared to overlook the vital role of the human soul, spirit, and will in the evolution of wisdom. They did not focus enough on the process of *becoming* wise. There is a need to explore *how* wisdom evolves during human life.
2. Over the last four decades, wisdom research has intensified in several disciplines; however, in HE, it has been neglected for a long time, gaining attention only since the early 2000s (Diamond, 2021). Since the 2000s, numerous wisdom pedagogy models have emerged, and they require reconceptualisation. A better understanding of wisdom pedagogy needs more attention, and finally, the practical impacts of applying wisdom pedagogy need to be studied.
3. There is a shift in paradigms in higher education. Marketisation, corporatisation, standardisation, outcome-oriented rationality, massification, and internationalisation are the major trends in higher education (Magnússon & Rytzler, 2022).
4. There is a need to develop and apply a pedagogy that prepares students for the unknown and uncertain world (Barnett, 2022). This paper argues that wisdom pedagogy can address this need, as it prepares students for life's uncertainties and fosters human flourishing (Barnett, 2015).
5. Wisdom pedagogy aims more to educate than teach. It focuses on the emancipation of all participants (teachers, students) in the learning process, and on the four key dimensions (i.e., cognitive, behavioural, affective, and spiritual) of the becoming wise process of a person (cf. Figure 1).
6. In wisdom pedagogy, the traditional didactic triangle needs to be transformed from being teacher-oriented and content-focused to being process-focused (Miyamoto, 2022).
7. Wisdom pedagogy has a process (Figure 3) where the teacher and students are equal in the learning process; they are both learners and knowledge providers, working together to create a better understanding of a phenomenon that is meaningful for both.
8. In wisdom pedagogy, the role of teachers is pivotal in initiating the learning process and engaging students in learning. They are the driving forces in creating a room for cultivating an individual's '*becoming wise*' process and for emancipation (Barnett, 1994; Magnússon & Rytzler, 2022; Säfström, 2011).
9. Wisdom pedagogy has a strong emancipatory and relational character, it educates for life (Jakubik, 2022b); it educates for being in the world; it cares for *life-world becoming* of students (Jakubik, 2023);

it facilitates a better understanding of the world around us; and it helps to provide possible solutions to the global challenges of the world (Maxwell, 2012, 2014; W.E.F., 2024).

The limitation of this conceptual study offers implications for wisdom and educational researchers. Further research is needed in definition, operationalisation, and in measurement of wisdom (Ardelt, 2003, p. 281). Because wisdom has no universally accepted definition, there is a need to develop a general definition of this concept (Bangen et al., 2003, p. 1263). The spiritual dimension of wisdom would need more exploration (Bratianu, 2015). There is a shift needed from researching the phenomenon of 'being a wise person' to 'becoming a wise person'.

Empirical studies would be needed to show how wisdom pedagogy works in practice (Magnússon & Rytzler 2022). Like Nouri and Sajjadi, this paper also calls for further research "on continuing to develop a practical framework to design emancipatory-based curricula and instructional programs and to examine their effectiveness in real learning situations" (Nouri & Sajjadi, 2014, p. 85). Empirical research on learning, on wisdom pedagogy teaching practices (didactic) could provide evidence on how the proposed framework and process work in practice (Biesta, 2007, 2009, 2010).

Researchers could gain a deeper understanding of how the processes of becoming wise operate, and how wisdom pedagogy can be effectively applied in higher education (Diamond, 2021). There is a need for long-term research to show the impacts of wisdom pedagogy on students' self-formation and on society (Freire, 1970; Maxwell, 2014, 2021a). Due to the paradigm shift from the knowledge society to the wise society (Goede, 2011), it is worth exploring how teams, communities, organisations, and societies can become wise. Researchers could focus more on the contextual (i.e., international, cultural, religious, environmental) dimensions of wisdom, on how to share best practices, and how to achieve the common good. Educational researchers could investigate how to shift from an epistemology-focused to an ontology-focused approach in higher education (Barnett, 2022; Danermark et al., 2005), as well as how to transform the traditional didactic triangle (Miyamoto, 2022) with wisdom pedagogy. These further research agendas offer purpose, motivation, opportunities, and a focus on wisdom and education for researchers for many years ahead.

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A bölcsesség fejlődése és taníthatósága a felsőoktatásban

A következő paradigmaváltás az emberiség történelmében a tudásalapú társadalomtól a bölcs társadalom felé való elmozdulás lesz, ahol az oktatás szerepe alapvető fontosságúvá válik a diákok bölcsességének ápolásában. Ez a koncepcionális tanulmány arra keresi a választ, hogy hogyan fejlődik és hogyan tanítható a bölcsesség. A kutatási módszer a kritikai realizmus kutatási filozófiáján, az abduktív elméletépítő megközelítésen alapul. Az adatokat kritikai integratív szakirodalmi áttekintéssel gyűjtöttük. A tanulmány kiemeli a bölcsességkutatás és a felsőoktatás trendjeit. Célja, hogy megteremtse a bölccsé válás kereteit, és bemutassa a bölcsességpedagógia lehetséges folyamatát. A tanulmány feltárta, hogy a bölcsességet hosszú ideje elhanyagolták a felsőoktatásban. A cikk kreatív és újszerű elméleti hozzájárulást tartalmaz az evolúciós pedagógiához, és indítványozza a javasolt tanítási folyamat valós tanítási helyzetekben történő tesztelését, valamint a bölcsességpedagógia körüli diskurzus folytatását a felsőoktatásban.

Kulcsszavak: *bölccsé válni*, *bölcsességpedagógia*, *emancipációs pedagógia*, *felsőoktatás*, *antropocén*, *test-szellem-lélek*, *bölcsesség*