This is a chapter from the book:
Newton, D.P. (2014) *Thinking with Feeling*, London, Routledge

Chapter 7
Wise Thoughts in Action: Hearts and minds in harmony

Education can easily become little more than acquiring information when what is needed is wisdom in using it (Gregorian, 2007; Kuhn & Udell, 2001; Sternberg, 2001). Wise thinking produces a sufficiently comprehensive understanding of a specific situation to point to acceptable actions. The process recognises uncertainty, considers information offered by the emotional system and makes principled decisions about actions. The aim of this chapter is to present some views of wisdom and, in the light of these, describe certain distinctive aspects of wise thought which make emotion fundamental to its processes. It then considers and illustrates what contribution formal education might make to the development of a capacity for wise thinking.

Wise thinking

Wisdom has long been valued and the wise venerated. In Ancient Egypt, administrators, scribes and temple initiates were taught to be wise with the help of maxims. In Greece, the Delphic Oracle declared Socrates to be the wisest man alive and his wisdom was disseminated in Plato's Academy. In Ancient China, the sage was the ideal person, renowned for thoughtful listening. The great Confucian scholar, Dong Zhongsu, considered wisdom to be one of the great virtues which listening could produce (Kwok, 1989). Wisdom had a high status amongst medieval Anglo-Saxons who condensed it into proverbs and believed that 'a man … must adorn himself with wise learning' (Kramer, 2009: 1). The writings of wise people were collected and stored in the House of Wisdom in Baghdad until its destruction in the thirteenth century (Birren & Svensson, 2005; Brugman, 2006; Curnow, 2010; Clements, 2008; Hollon, 1971; Hua, 2012; Meri & Bacharach, 2006). Always considered to be the pinnacle of achievement and a cardinal virtue (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000; Carr, 2010), wisdom has diverse meanings. It can, for instance, refer to strict religious observance, insightful understandings of the world or the human condition, or an ability to act prudently or profitably (e.g. Duvall & Hays, 2005; Ozoliņš, 2013; Zuck, 1991). Wisdom has been studied mainly in theology, philosophy and psychology (although psychologists generally avoided it until late in the twentieth century (Jeste et al., 2010)). It has also attracted some attention from time to time in education (Lehtinen, 2010).

Theology and wisdom

Some religions distinguish between secular and divine wisdom. Secular wisdom generally refers to those understandings offered by, for instance, physics, botany or history and is constructed by experts in those fields. Divine wisdom, on the other hand, refers to understandings revealed by, for example, the study of religious texts. This revealed understanding can supply a world view with values, a meaning for life, and what constitutes appropriate conduct in preparation for the next life. Secular wisdom, limited by the human mind, unable to address the purpose of life and potentially producing an overweening vanity, is seen as the lesser of the two wisdoms (e.g. Hattaway, 1968; Kunau, 2011; Scott, 1961; Kołakowski, 1972; Signer, 2008). Nevertheless, a division between secular and divine wisdom is absent in some religions. Everything is connected in Native American spirituality; a wise person feels that connection and lives in harmony with the world (Garrett & Wilbur, 1999). In the Confucian tradition, a wise person brings peace and harmony to home and society (Yang, 2001). Without accepting the need for a divine entity, the atheist or agnostic may, nevertheless, have a world view and values (Taylor, 2007). For instance, a concern for the Earth's ability to sustain life, expressed more poetically by Lovelock (2006) as the Gaia theory, could underpin beliefs about how people should interact with the animate and inanimate environment. This points to an ethical pluralism in some societies as values derive from different views of reality and change with them (Baum, 2010).

Philosophy and wisdom

In philosophy, Aristotle distinguished between theoretical wisdom, associated with extensive, coherent knowledge, and practical wisdom, approximating to knowing how to live a good life in relation to others. While acknowledging the value of practical wisdom, theoretical wisdom was, for Aristotle, supreme as it brought mankind nearer to the gods (Ross, 1980). According to Giddy (2012), the African sage sees wise people as having convincing answers to fundamental questions about the world and the human condition. Ryan (1999: 124, 131), however, argues that 'a wise person does wise things' and that takes more than just knowledge. Ryan concluded that wisdom is appreciating the value of and knowing how to live well in specific contexts. This could be described as a practical wisdom which calls for values, principles, judgments and decisions. The Russian philosopher, Sadovnichiy (2006), describes wisdom as, 'the wide experience of many generations, collected and checked over the millennia' accompanied by an ability to use it. Academic erudition alone is not enough: wisdom is the informed, successful, deliberate and principled navigation of life's affairs (Schollmeier, 1989). The British philosopher, Nicholas Maxwell, (1984) has argued cogently for an urgent change in emphasis in academic enquiry from acquiring knowledge to promoting wisdom on the grounds that our

knowledge has outstripped our ability to use it wisely. Using (or deciding not to use) knowledge often involves choices and decisions and Kierkegaard has highlighted the role of seemingly inconsequential decisions in determining life's trajectory (Kaufman, 2009; Milbank, 1996).

Psychology and wisdom

Psychologists generally recognize wisdom's cognitive and affective dimensions although some tend to focus on its more accessible or measurable cognitive competencies (Marchand, 2003). Baltes and Staudinger (1993; 2000: 122; 2008: 56), for instance, describe wisdom as expertise in 'the fundamental pragmatics of life' which entails 'good judgment and actions that contribute to living well … despite the uncertainties of human life'. Sternberg (2000) offers a balance theory of wisdom in which tacit procedural knowledge is applied to life's problems to achieve a common good. This calls for a balancing of intra, inter and extra-personal interests. Clearly, philosophical notions relating to applied or practical wisdom are evident in the psychological concept (Brugman, 2006). Brown (2006) considers that wisdom calls for self-knowledge, altruism, judgment, life knowledge, life skills and the management of emotions while Pascual-Leone (1990) saw a necessary role of emotions in being able to gain an empathetic understanding of others. All this wise thinking was labelled 'post-formal' to signify that it was beyond Piaget's 'final', formal stage of cognitive development (Piaget, 1972), being underpinned by the mental processes of, for example, recall, reflection, reasoning, understanding, critical and creative thinking (Labouvie-Vief, 1990). This complex thought is applied to life's ill-defined problems to facilitate personal decisions, advising others, managing society, and reviewing the direction of one's life (Kramer, 1990). Staudinger and Glück (2011) divide it into general wisdom (in which thought is about the situations of others) and personal wisdom (when thought is applied to one's own circumstances). Given the potential difficulties of dealing with one's own emotional attachments, they argue that general wisdom tends to be the easier of the two. Few may reach the peaks of wisdom according to psychological tests but at least some adolescents are known to become wiser with time (Marchand, 2003). Wisdom is not an all or nothing matter; there are shades of wisdom and someone can be wise in one situation and unwise in another (Jeste et al., 2010). According to Marchand, the first level of wisdom is characterized by narrow perspectives, a dichotomous view of right and wrong, and certainty; the second by idiosyncratic decisions, a recognition of context, priorities and people's goals; the third by thought involving multiple hypotheses, a comparison of options, and a willingness to compromise.

Some might argue that wisdom is what it is commonly believed to be. In the merchant class in medieval Holland, for instance, a wise man was described

as civilized, sensible, self-reliant, prudent in his affairs and God-fearing, a view which evolved into 'the cunning necessary to amass as much money as possible' (Pleij, 2002: 700). Recent notions or folk theories of wisdom have been collected. For instance, in Canada, wise people have been seen as knowledgeable, educated, intellectually able, thoughtful, skilled in everyday affairs, and exceptional. They can see through to essentials, they understand the self and others, they are unobtrusive, respectful, tolerant, and have good judgment (Holliday & Chandler, 1986). US citizens generally associate reasoning ability, learning from experience, judgment and perspicacity with wisdom (Sternberg, 1985), while in Austria, notions include the wise as able, insightful, reflective, compassionate, moderate and having a desire to help others (Bluck and Glück 2005). These notions have much in common with those of philosophers and psychologists. Yang (2011) has pointed out, however, that notions of wisdom are acquired in a particular culture so different conceptions can arise in and be maintained by different cultural groups. For instance, in contrast to Sternberg's study, Hispanic people in the USA have tended to associate spirituality, a willingness to learn and being involved in doing good works with wisdom (Valdez, 1993). A wise person in Taiwan must be knowledgeable, competent, benevolent, compassionate, modest and open-minded and, to be judged wise, must show it consistently through his or her actions (Ardelt & Oh, 2010; Takahashi, 2000; Yang, 2011). Similarities in notions across cultural and temporal boundaries, however, have led some to propose universal features of wisdom, such as, self-knowledge, detachment, integrated thinking and self-transcendence (Curnow, 1999). Nevertheless, just because societies value a particular kind of wisdom does not mean they value it for the same reason; Christopher and Hickinbottom (2008) warn against assuming an identity of purpose. In parts of the West, wisdom promotes individuality and autonomy; in parts of the East, it furthers group interests and supports filial duty.

Wisdom has, amongst other things, meant having a broad and deep understanding of the world, following rules of conduct, living a virtuous life, having religious faith, being sceptical, and managing the uncertainties of life (Brugman, 2006). Aristotle's concept of practical wisdom, however, bears some resemblance to a notion of wisdom seen as particularly relevant today. Practical wisdom as the construction of broadly contextualized understandings of specific situations, potential actions and likely consequences, and the choosing of acceptable actions for the good of the self and others, is generally what is meant now by the process of wise thinking (e.g. Hollon, 1971; Jump, 2012; Schollmeier, 1989). While such thinking strives to construct wise products, just how wise they are depends on their success although others may have views on the proposed course of action. In what follows, wisdom means thought for the purpose of constructing a more or less

comprehensive understanding of a specific situation with possible courses of action, considering likely consequences of those actions, and the choosing of an action on a principled basis. What is an acceptable action in a particular context calls for values, moral judgments and decisions. Education, on the other hand, has tended to focus on the development of knowledge which, at its best, may amount to a theoretical wisdom, albeit satisfying but potentially inert.

Education and wisdom

Education is an ambiguous and vague term which can be interpreted in different ways at different times and in different contexts (Harðarson, 2012; Katz, 2009). Practical wisdom does not have to be fostered in the classroom but, given the regard for it, it is not surprising that it has been described as the most valuable of possible educational goals, potentially providing the basis for 'living well' (Gregory, 2009: 117). White (2007), for instance, sees school education as opening the way to personal fulfilment, involvement, work, and wisdom. Ferrari (2009: 1099) believes that fostering wisdom prepares people for a 'responsible and happy life'. In the USA, Hollon (1971) argued that higher education should also be the pursuit of wisdom and, more recently, the vice-chancellor of Macquarie University has maintained that education was and is to help people become wiser and, in so doing, make the world a better place (Schwartz, 2012). Similar views are expressed in the UK. Carr (2010), for example, expresses concerns about the erosion of higher education by utilitarian, narrow, vocational concerns and Pring (2010: 91) argues for a wider vision of learning which supports 'the intelligent management of life' (see also, Jump, 2012). Practical wisdom is also seen as a 'new direction' for adult education (Bassett, 2011: 35).

Some argue, however, that wisdom is not teachable and that what is needed is knowledge from which wisdom springs (Woodhead, 2012). Nevertheless, there are people who are very knowledgeable and yet unwise: knowledge alone is not enough. Practical wisdom calls for the construction of context-specific and fairly comprehensive understandings of situations, potential actions, consequential inferencing and informed judgments about what is acceptable (Ardelt, 2004). Evolution saw to an ability to think but not to some of the personal attributes, attitudes, dispositions and practice which shape it. Experience may teach some of these but the way may be prepared in school. Studies of the effect of thinking skills programs on achievement find them to be generally worthwhile (Higgins, et al., 2005). More specifically, wisdom-related thinking can be enhanced by teaching certain knowledge-search strategies and activating wisdom-related resources (Böhmig-Krumhaar et al., 2002; Saudlinger & Glück, 2011). Nevertheless, some may argue that fostering practical wisdom is desirable but futile for most students as it requires 'post-

formal' thought. But wise thinking, like understanding, is spread along a continuum (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000; Bassett, 2011; Ardelt, 2004). In contexts that are meaningful and matter to the learner, thinking for action may usefully be practised even when it is rudimentary by adult standards. Some might argue that simplifying situations to bring them within the grasp of such students renders them trivial but what matters here is the progressive development of personal attributes and expertise in the processes relevant to wise thinking. While accepting that maturation and experience matter, wisdom is underpinned by attributes and elements which could benefit from practice and which lay a foundation for future wise thinking (Lehtinen, 2010).

Given that wisdom is intended to be benevolent, supporting the 'good life' and the 'common good', Paris (2001) has asked how 'good' is to be identified. This is an important point (Grayling, 2003). What is good or bad is determined by values. Generally, family, society and formal education transmit and reinforce some of these values which help the learner function in a given culture (Stipeck, 2002). Nevertheless, cultures are rarely homogenous and while sub-cultures share values, they may also have their own. Increasing globalization and migration add to the diversity. As described earlier, Schwartz (1994) found values overlap in a wide variety of cultures and these provide some common ground for deciding what might be good but a teacher will also need to recognize that a shared value may not always mean that it refers to the same ends in different cultures. Learners, even adults, are unlikely to arrive with complete and coherent world views, even when these are provided for them through, for instance, transmitted religious beliefs. While education may be partly about the common values of the overarching society, teachers will need to recognize that there is variation and that values change with time. What counts as 'fundamental' and 'good' is culture dependent and there is generally some loose consensus about it in a given community (Staudinger & Glück, 2011). In the West, for instance, it can centre on the individual and autonomy; in the East, it may focus on the collective and filial duty (Christopher & Hickinbottom, 2008). While some of what one person sees as 'good' is likely to be seen similarly by others, agreement is unlikely to be entire or fixed.

Jeste et al. (2010) collected the views of fifty-seven 'international wisdom experts'. These experts tended to believe that wisdom is a uniquely human quality, it is not synonymous with intelligence, and the process of wise thinking can be learned. In short, it is not an all or nothing concept and, even at its best, it approaches perfection only asymptotically (Pascual-Leone, 1990). On balance, fostering practical wisdom or, at least, fostering what underpins it, is a worthwhile goal. Just because it is not done, does not mean it cannot be done. But, what might teaching do?

At least in the West, emotions have been seen as bad for thought (Haidt, 2001) but, from an evolutionary perspective, they may help, not hinder, personal and social decision making and commitment to action (Buss, 2001; Hasleton & Ketelaar, 2006). In wise thinking, it is not simply a matter of emotions shaping thought: affect is at its core and dispassionate thought alone could produce unwise actions.

Moods, emotions and wise thinking

Moods and emotions prompt behaviour in an attempt to support what matters to someone (Oatley & Jenkins, 1996; Damasio, 2000). Given that wisdom involves various kinds of thought, including constructing relatively comprehensive understandings, creating alternative courses of action and inferring their consequences (Sternberg, 2003), it has the potential to interact with moods and emotions to the same extent as its constituents. For example, depressed people tend to recall sad events more than others and may not to see the wood for the trees when trying to construct an understanding. In creative thinking, those in a happy mood feel secure enough to engage in broad, flexible thinking which promotes the construction of alternative courses of action. Intensely activating emotions, like elation, may take mental resources from productive thought. When making principled decisions – the purpose of practical wisdom – people tend not to know that their choices can be shaped for good or ill by what are often fleeting emotions yet these choices can have long-term implications (Andrade & Ariely, 2009; Bower, 1981; De Dreu at al., 2008; Fredrickson, 2004; Grawitch & Munz, 2005; Hirt et al., 2008). Even if such interactions are ignored, practical wisdom seeks decisions and it is the emotional system which often evaluates the alternatives and indicates the personally preferred option (Hullett, 2005; Isen (1993). As Immordino-Yang and Damasio (2007: 3) put it, emotion-related processes provide a 'rudder to guide judgment and action'. Our concerns, some of which are held unconsciously, enter into our decisions and the emotional system is well-placed to weigh the options against these. Objective reasoning may advise that working for a big company offers more opportunities than exist in a small business but this ignores a lot of what matters to the applicant: the emotional system is quick to point that out. While intelligence may help, it is not sufficient: values, moral sensitivities and personal qualities also play a part.

Values

Values are beliefs of broad application which lead us to favour certain behaviours and outcomes in life. Schwartz (1994) has demonstrated that they operate as a system in which some values have priority. They motivate us to seek action and help to gain what is preferred. Values may be held and

applied without conscious thought so, at times, they may not be evident, even to ourselves. Schwartz (1994) found evidence for ten types of value relating to:

Power (e.g. social status, control of people),
Achievement (e.g. success, ambition),
Hedonism (e.g. pleasure seeking),
Stimulation (e.g. excitement, risk-taking),
Self-direction (e.g. freedom, creativity),
Universalism (equality, tolerance),
Benevolence (e.g. helpfulness, honesty),
Tradition (respect, devoutness),
Conformity (e.g. politeness, normative behaviour), and
Security (e.g. safety, stability).

He divided these into two dimensions: Self-Enhancement (e.g. achievement and power) versus Self-Transcendence (e.g. benevolence and universalism) and Openness to Change (e.g. stimulation and self-direction) versus Conservation (e.g. security and conformity) and found these dimensions to be 'very nearly universal' across a wide variety of cultures although particular values and priorities are not always identical (Schwartz, 1992, 1994: 42). People develop or acquire such values from basic needs, interaction with carers, experience, society, ready-packaged world views and their own reason (Freeman, 2000).

The role of values in practical wisdom is recognized in the attributes commonly associated with the wise. For example, a study of Taiwanese conceptions of wisdom found them to include competence, benevolence, compassion and openness, corresponding to Schwartz's Achievement, Benevolence and Universalism (Yang, 2001). In other words, wise people have guiding values which determine behaviour. Other values commonly associated with wisdom include being respectful, fair, empathetic, mindful, conscientious, and showing humanity, tolerance, integrity moderation, consideration for others, and being open to ideas and alternatives. The common problems of social life have probably produced similar values in many societies, hence the commonalities observed by Schwartz. Nevertheless, different solutions to those problems may produce different values or priorities in and between cultures.

Moral judgments and decisions

Values determine what someone sees as good or bad and may motivate a desire for some state of affairs. Practical wisdom seeks to achieve that state of affairs through actions. Negotiating a way to that state can call for moral judgments and decisions. Moral judgments determine which actions are right and which are wrong. (Evolutionary psychologists suggest that there are also

some innate moral emotions, such as caring and sympathy for others (e.g. Hauser, 2006). If this is so, they may come from innate values.) For many years, making moral judgments was considered to be a purely rational exercise. Kant (1785/2002) argued that morality was a matter for reason and, more recently, Harris (2011) does something similar. Psychology also focused on reason until recently when it found that moral judgment is more a matter of intuition and emotional response than conscious reasoning (Greene & Haidt, 2002; Pham, 2007). Haidt's social-intuitionist theory describes moral judgments as made in quick, affect-laden, automatic evaluations which answer the question, 'How do I feel about it?' The valence of the feeling (positive or negative) indicates the outcome. Making judgments in this way takes unconscious values into account, it is fast and it enables the weighing of dissimilar elements and complex situations (Haidt, 2001; Greene & Haidt, 2002; Peters et al., 2006). Haidt adds that we tend to justify these emotional judgments rationally afterwards, if we do so at all.

The point is that decisions are often taken intuitively with a lot of direction from the emotional system. A classic example is the rail trolley problem. A runaway trolley is on route to kill five people but a quick throw of the switch can send it down another track where it would kill only one person. Would you throw the switch? Most say they would. In another scenario, the only way to stop the trolley is to push someone in front of it. Would you do that? The outcome would be the same but most feel this direct action to be repugnant, presumably because it contravenes a moral precept, innate or otherwise. However, if their moods are made positive beforehand, they are more likely to agree to push the bystander to his death, demonstrating that it is an emotional balance (Valdesolo & DeSteno, 2006). The philosopher, David Hume (1739/1978), was exceptional in considering 'sentiment' to determine moral judgments, something which has found favour only more recently.

On this basis, the emotional system facilitates judgments and decision making and helps us commit to and persevere with actions (Haselton & Ketelaar, T., 2006). It is not, however, a perfect weighing machine. Schnall et al. (2008b) had participants make moral judgments about scenarios involving sexual relations, marriage, car use, and a morally controversial film, while inducing disgust in participants using an unpleasant odour. Those subject to the odour were more severe in their judgments than those who were not. Schnall (2011) concluded that what is dirty or disgusting is felt to be wrong and this feeling generalizes to intuitive moral decision making. Conversely, cleanliness reduces the severity of moral judgments (Schnall et al., 2008a). Tests of moral reasoning amongst college students in Canada also indicates that elated students take longer and offer more simplistic, minimalist solutions than those who are mildly depressed (Zarinpoush et al., 2000). There is one further

effect which should be mentioned. Some people tend not to act in accordance with their values when they also value what others think of them; in effect, their emotional system tells them to do what they believe others expect.

Spellman and Schnall (2009) go beyond emotional effects and argue for embodied cognition in which other bodily states also contribute to the intuitive responses described by Haidt (2001). For instance, holding a warm drink in the hands inclines people to judge others as warm natured. This wider view seems plausible but does not entirely rule out the possibility that bodily states may also have their effect through the affect they generate.

Personal prerequisites of wisdom

Wise thinking is not always easy. For instance, chemical and physical changes in adolescents' brains may be responsible for their increased tendency to be impulsive, rash and seek sensation and risk. The heady mix of under-developed values, impulse and thrill-seeking is likely to bear strongly upon moral judgment and decision making (Albert & Steinberg, 2011). At the same time, it is easy to be mentally lazy and disregard others. There needs to be an inclination and a readiness to take principled decisions about actions. This calls for attitudes, habits of mind and ways of thinking which support, amongst other things, understanding matters in broad contexts, taking other perspectives, identifying consequences, recognizing the limits of knowledge and certainty, weighing alternatives, and controlling impulses (Bassett, 2011; Haidt, 2002; Staudinger & Glück, 2011). Many of the personal qualities believed to support practical wisdom are cultivated in a variety of societies (Jeste & Harris, 2010).

To sum up, practical wisdom can draw on a variety of kinds of thinking which are, themselves, potentially subject to interaction with moods and emotions. There is also an inextricable connection between the intellect and the emotions in wise thinking when it makes decisions of personal consequence. This is not to say that the emotional rudder will always keep the ship away from the rocks − it may serve vested interests which are irrelevant, inappropriate, false, or unachievable. For instance, the values of another age may be admirable but irrelevant today. In wise thinking at its best, however, there is a constructive interaction between objective and subjective mental processes which integrates affect, cognition and experience while recognizing the rights and sensitivities of others to produce advice worthy of consideration (Sternberg, 2005).

Wise thinkers and wisdom

Those with knowledge and experience may develop some ability to make choices which turn out to be wise but those with little opportunity for

extended interaction with others seem less likely to do so. Given that this experience comes from more than formal education and continues after it, wisdom may develop over time, giving some foundation to the popular belief in 'older and wiser'. Age is not, however, a guarantee of wisdom: people need to be willing and able to learn from that experience and use their mental abilities to produce wise actions. If they do, there is some evidence that wisdom produces or, at least is associated with, increased feelings of well-being and life-satisfaction (Sternberg, 2005). General wisdom, giving wise council, has been described as easier than personal wisdom which applies to one's own actions. Giving wise council on matters of general concern is, of course, subject to the mood and emotional effects involved in arguing, explaining and creating. A wise person will probably be cautious about advising others; people are different and what is right for one can be wrong for another. Instead, wise thinking could be fostered by helping others make their vested interests conscious and reflect on their validity and relevance in the context concerned. Can formal education make a useful contribution?

Some implications for practice

The opportunity to develop a capacity for wisdom may be amongst the best offerings of formal education but education has its own exigencies and short term goals. A teacher under pressure can often achieve such goals without a concern for matters of wisdom. Attempts at fostering wisdom in higher education may even be subverted by the students themselves. Hollon (1974), in the USA, highlighted the way that developing wisdom can be sidelined by students who favour the development of knowledge and skills for monetary advantage. Hollon was not against the making of money − the necessities of life require it − but he saw a great loss to the lives of his students in such a narrow view.

Fostering practical wisdom

Reznitskaya et al. (2009) have described the use of stories with 10 and 11 year-olds to stimulate dialogue about right and wrong and wise behaviour. One such story is about a rescued wild goose, nursed to health by a young girl (*Amy's Goose* by E. Holmes, Vintage). The children discuss whether it is right or wrong to keep the goose as a pet and consider questions, such as, 'Do animals deserve a good life?' *Rain Forest* (Helen Cowcher, Corgi) describes what the destruction of a forest does to its animals and can be used similarly. There was evidence that a tendency to take multiple perspectives spread amongst the children during such discussions. History is a subject which comprises plausible stories of people pursuing their own interests, sometimes in conjunction with what they see as the good of others. These stories have been seen as a resource for fostering wisdom in classrooms (Brown, 2006; Sternberg, 2001; Wineburg & Wilson, 1991). For example, the teacher presents

the framework for some specific issue, such as, The Boston Tea Party. The class (in groups) research the topic and its underlying issues (e.g. British taxation of its colonies) and debate it, focusing on right and wrong as seen from both sides and on the wisdom of particular actions. Roca (2008) has described teaching for practical wisdom in business studies in a university programme. He argues for the analysis of 'stories' about predatory businesses and a 'wise' reconstruction of those stories by the students. With undergraduates in the USA, Havlick and Hourdequin (2005) aimed to foster practical wisdom in environmental studies. Working to the principle that practical wisdom is highly contextualized and needs the application of knowledge, they argue for taking students out of the classroom and into the field where they can be engaged with real-world problems in physical, intellectual and emotional ways. Bassett (2007), when working with older adults, has them note wise and foolish actions described in the media and turn those seen as foolish into wise actions. These examples illustrate that 'stories' of one form or another are widely seen as useful ways of presenting specific contexts to stimulate consideration of values, make moral judgements, take decisions and exercise thinking perspectives, such as, taking another's point of view. Such 'stories' could be presented using information technology which allows the learner to interact with it privately, at a comfortable pace (Lehtinen, 2010). Staudinger and Glück (2011) describe proverbs as cultural crystallizations of wisdom. Understanding and evaluating such proverbs has been suggested as a way of fostering wise thinking (Bleyl, 2007).

Ardelt (2004) warns against only developing 'wisdom related knowledge' that is 'theoretical, abstract, and detached' when, in reality, wisdom is personal, concrete and applied. Gregory (2009) adds that fostering wise thinking is appropriate at all stages provided it is not an exercise in solving personally remote quandaries. Ideally, the potential for relevant and personal action should be drawn from students' concerns. Kuhn & Udell (2001: 201) argue that children acquire dispositions, awareness and 'tools for wisdom' by reflecting on issues from their own experiences, an ability which can develop with age (Marchand, 2003).

Preparing students for and practising principled decision making

Such studies are useful as they suggest how practical wisdom might be fostered at a given stage of education. Given the nature of wisdom, fostering what underpins it needs a long term perspective. How learners develop, emotionally and cognitively, is also important as it places limits on what is possible. For example, children's conceptions of moral behaviour develop with time (Kohlberg et al., 1983) and the interaction of emotions and cognition continues to change through adolescence and into adulthood (Albert &

Steinberg, 2011). Nevertheless, even very young children can have some grasp of what wisdom entails even though it rudimentary. For instance, notions of wisdom and the wise person amongst Austrian children (Grades 1 to 4) included attributes such as intelligence, social ability, and some recognition of the need for values: one response described a wise person as someone who 'knows what is good and bad' (Glück et al., 2012).

Taking all together, a framework for progressively developing the necessities of wise thinking is suggested in Figure 7.1. On the left is forethought, being careful, thinking ahead and choosing actions with prudence and caution. Here, situations are relatively simple. On the right is practical wisdom, the generation and principled selection of ideas for achieving particular goals. These generally involve more complex situations. Thinking about the situations calls for certain personal qualities and attributes. For those on the left, there is a willingness to consider consequences, a readiness to reflect on experience, to feel sympathy, and have values like harmony and fairness, qualities within the grasp of younger students. Towards the right, these become progressively more demanding or develop later. For instance, they might include an allowance for uncertainty. In this way, younger students engage in prudent thinking and show forethought about consequences while older students engage in principled thought about actions in more complex situations. In the early stages, qualities and attributes may be developed and used in isolation, as indicated by their distance from the line of progress. Over time, they are increasingly brought together, orchestrated and applied in situations calling for principled decision making, recognizing that 'wisdom is an emergent property of integrated brain functioning' (Jeste & Harris, 2010: 1603).

<Figure 7.1 about here>

Given that wise thinking can involve, amongst other things, deductions, causal understandings and creative thoughts, what has been said about forethought, action and afterthought in connection with each of these also applies to fostering wise thinking and need not be re-iterated. But, in addition, emotions do not simply interact with wise thinking but are an integral part of its decision making in matters of consequence for the self and for others. This is where logic is potentially useful but is not everything. Decision making in such situations is supported by various personal qualities and may be practised at different levels. To illustrate this with learners of different ages, some exemplification follows. (Readers will appreciate that concrete exemplification necessitates assuming certain values, such as that people have value *sui generis* and there is a necessity to live together successfully (Ozoliņš, 2013). Prescription is not intended.)

Elementary/primary school

This would focus on the left side of Figure 7.1 to develop personal qualities (e.g. empathy and sympathy), values, such as those associated with universalism (e.g. fairness, reciprocity, protecting the environment) and benevolence (e.g. being helpful, kind, considerate) to apply in forethought and decision making. Children as young as five years can see emotions as having an important role in deciding what is good or bad behaviour (Danovitch & Keil, 2008). As they develop the ability to take other perspectives, some practice at self-transcendence could be included. Classroom and playground events might be used to teach the 'Golden Rule' ('Don't do to others what you don't want them to do to you'). Adults necessarily take decisions for children but there are many opportunities for children to see the value of forethought and that consequences follow decisions. Even choosing a book to read may entail giving up the chance to read a different book. The basis of such decisions may be unconscious and intuitive but as Haidt (2001) has pointed out, intuitive decisions are not to be dismissed out of hand but may need scrutiny. These embryonic qualities and habits may be integrated progressively through stories and events which present dilemmas or predicaments for children to discuss, 'What should s/he do?' Teachers of younger children generally teach a variety of subjects and this can facilitate wide ranging thought, a feature of wise thinking.

Middle/secondary school

Moving to the middle of Figure 7.1, additional qualities may be fostered (e.g. a willingness to compromise, a recognition that knowledge has limits, actions can have unanticipated consequences, outcomes can be uncertain). Values would be more open to reflection in generating relatively simple advice for others (general wisdom) and themselves (personal wisdom). A study of the notions of wisdom amongst adolescents in a variety of countries found them to see wise people as charismatic, unconventional and purposeful thinkers who were rarely poor, pessimistic or naïve (Sanchez-Escobedo, 2013). Notions of wisdom can be more open to development after about 14 years of age (Staudinger & Glück, 2011). Students could also begin to recognize that decisions are rarely entirely conscious, intellectual exercises but involve unconscious values often signalled by feelings. Particularly relevant here is the need to draw attention to impulsiveness as awareness of it can reduce it (Lehrer, 2009). In subjects like History, students see the consequences of decisions and may consider how they would handle such situations themselves. Although subjects like technology often concern themselves with the inanimate, they affect lives and present us with alternatives, each with consequences. Proverbs as neatly packaged (but limited) guides to wise action may sometimes complement such activities (e.g. *You need the wit to know what*

to say and the wisdom not to say it. It is better to limp slowly along the right path than to stride quickly along the wrong one. When elephants fight, the grass is crushed (Giddy, 2012).) A systematic **ABC** approach may guide students' thought:

- **Assess**, understand and clarify the situation and the desired outcome, explore how it impinges on lives, values, beliefs and goals.
- **Build** actions which might produce the desired outcome, recognizing that nothing is certain and compromise may be necessary.
- **Choose** an action with morally acceptable consequences.

This **ABC** approach may be practised on situations of personal consequence for the students. Lacking experience, students have been found to learn from those with it (Jeste & Harris, 2010). Older students are often taught by a variety of subject specialists and that can result in compartmentalized teaching and learning. This is not insurmountable: the International Baccalaureate programme, for instance, has students explore a complex problem in a cross-curricular way (Wells, 2011).

Senior school and beyond

Towards the right side of Figure 7.1, what has been practised earlier would be extended with increasing expectations of self-regulated thinking. By this stage, values may be strongly-held and discussion may be perceived as threatening. Older students may be in higher education where wisdom is supposed to be a significant goal. The development of wise thinking, however, can take second place to the transmission of information. Reasoning and logic matter but, when it comes to motivation, life goals and working with others, so can emotion. By this stage, students should appreciate that life's decisions are not matters for the intellect or the emotions alone, but for both in partnership (Webster, 2007, 164). As students usually specialize narrowly at this stage, they might consider dilemmas and moral and ethical problems in their fields of study. In Geography, for example, problems of population growth may be explored, the aim being to research the complexity of the problem and make choices (e.g. Repetto & Holmes, 1983). What is involved goes beyond the concerns of Geography and students need to show that they recognize this. Ethical decisions, however, are probably easier than ethical actions (Sternberg, 2013). Older students may develop some capacity for wisdom in action by mentoring others (Smith et al., 1994). While students may not reach the wise end of Figure 7.1, they should have the means to continue the journey.

Some teachers may already concern themselves with some of these ideas. For instance, relevant personal attributes may be developed by programmes which give attention to 'personhood' ('someone who thinks and feels about what she is doing') (Gregory, 2009: 112). Lipman (2004) argues for critical, creative and caring thinking. All have a role in wise thinking and the

associated dispositions (e.g. being sensitive to context, imaginative, and empathetic) would make a useful, even essential, contribution. Such personal attributes are potentially helpful. Indeed the long-term goal of developing a capacity for wise thinking and an inclination to use it could be a unifying concept for what are often worthy but isolated attributes.

In conclusion

Wisdom is underpinned by certain mental attributes and tendencies which may be developed so that they contribute increasingly to principled decision making. Preparing students for wise thinking may be amongst the most testing tasks a teacher faces and often lacks the rewards of seeing it come to fruition during formal education. Equally, the teacher is expected to be a model of wise behaviour, progressing as a novice from rigid lesson plans to flexible plans which take into account the students' points of view (Arlin, 1993).

The process of wise thinking is characterized badly if it is seen as a matter only for the intellect. Motivated by emotions, subject to them, and having them deeply embedded in it, practical wisdom is a partnership of heart and mind. Here, the emotional system provides us with information, draws our attention to matters of consequence, weighs alternatives, recommends one or two of them and prompts action (Peters et al., 2006). When successful, the partnership widens the definition of what it means to be rational (Stanovich, 2010). It is not, however, infallible and, for a successful partnership with the intellect, its recommendations may need scrutiny or critical thought. That is the subject of the next chapter.