

# Five Minds for the Future: Shaping the Future Through Education

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*The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education. Martin Luther King, Jr.<sup>1</sup>*

**A**thletic training as a profession has undergone significant change over the past decades. In an effort to better prepare athletic training professionals for the challenges of the future, we have expanded our employment venues, refined our accreditation processes, and even changed our professional organizational logo. With each change in the profession, we have remained focused on one central element—the future.

Howard Gardner, a world-renowned Harvard professor, contends that the future belongs to those who can maximize the potential of the “5 minds for the future.”<sup>2</sup> The 5 minds are divided into 2 distinct spheres—cognitive and human relations. The cognitive minds are the disciplined, synthesizing, and creating minds. The human relations minds are the respectful and ethical minds. Gardner professes that developing each of these minds is essential to maximizing one’s ability to embrace the challenges of the future.

The cognitive minds are truly anchored in professional education programs. The disciplined mind is content based and promotes mastery of competencies. This mind takes about a decade to fully master content and truly embraces the concept of lifelong learning. The synthesizing mind generates a mechanism by which the big picture is considered and information from one’s life and experiences are integrated. This mind allows professionals to scaffold their knowledge from the past into new, expanded knowledge for the future. The creating mind seeks to take chances to impact change despite the risks. Anchored in knowledge, personality, and temperament, the creating mind promotes risk taking because we learn so much even when we fail. Considered the depth, breadth, and stretch elements respectively, these minds guide intellectual discovery.

The human relations minds also play a critical role in preparing for the future. The respectful mind appreciates and acknowledges the need for harmony yet recognizes the need for discomfort in the change process. It is threatened by intolerance, ignorance, and prejudice. Lastly, the ethical mind considers how one’s behaviors reflect internalized personal and professional values. This mind pushes us to think about whom we want to be and how we want to contribute to the world, society, or the profession as a whole. Combined, these minds shape our foundational behaviors for professional practice.

In the future, there will likely be change. In the future, we will need to be disciplined. We need to discipline ourselves to embrace new concepts and new approaches while pushing hard to establish evidence to support what we do. In the future, we will need to synthesize the lessons from the past to help shape our future. Gardner emphasizes that in the future, the form of mind that is likely to be at greatest premium is the synthesizing mind, “and so it is perhaps fitting that the melding of the minds within an individual’s skin is the ultimate challenge of personal synthesis.”<sup>2(p24)</sup> In the future, the creating mind will be called upon frequently. As a profession, we must be creative, adaptive, and critically diligent to remain competitive in the health care market. Developing this mind through calculated risk taking to move our profession forward will create an environment for professional growth.

The human relations minds are not exempt from rich application to our field. The respectful mind will prove valuable as we become more diverse. Respect for others, respect for change, respect for interprofessional collaboration, and, most importantly, respect for ourselves as valued health care providers is paramount. Respect nurtures ethical decision making and behaviors. Jean-Baptiste Moliere<sup>3</sup> best articulates the value of the ethical mind for the future by stating, “It is not only for what we do that we are held responsible, but also for what we do not do.” It is time to be proactive and progressive in our education, both in the formal academic programs and with continuing education. It is our ethical obligation to seriously consider initiatives such as internationalization, interprofessional and professional education, and evidence-based practice as we reflect on how we can contribute to the world, society, and the profession.

As athletic trainers, we are obliged to prepare for the future. We are embarking upon an exciting time in our future. As we face the future as a profession, whether as students or professional members, education is at the core. As with all great things, education is central to promoting change. The *Athletic Training Education Journal* serves as a critical link to facilitating a community of scholars who can impact change through their research. For many of us, change creates dissonance. Reconciling the “tensions of the minds” will allow you to look more broadly and consider paradigms never before considered. Using the 5 minds as a framework, we promote disciplined inquiry, synthesized thoughts, creative research, respectful dialogue, and ethical discovery. We are strong and we are resilient. We are ideally positioned to make our mark on the future. And through education, our future appears very bright!

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## REFERENCES

1. King ML Jr. <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/m/martinluth402936.html>. Accessed February 4, 2014.
2. Garner H. The five minds for the future. *Stud Educ*. 2008;5(1/2): 17–24.
3. Moliere JBP. <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/m/moliere121226.html>. Accessed February 4, 2014.