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Strategies for Stimulating Intrinsic Consciousness in the Training Process

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Abstract: This article is dedicated to the educational researchers and academia involved in the initial training of students. The educational process is based on a set of principles, and intrinsic consciousness in one of them. It guides personality development towards forming a self-concept and worldview. Furthermore, this principle stems from one of the four dimensions of spiritual intelligence, namely transcendental awareness, which focuses on developing consciousness and self-awareness. The principle of intrinsic consciousness entails engaging students in academic activities that demand complex cognitive processes, such as analysis, synthesis, reflection, imagination as well as other mental faculties based on intuition. In this context, training approaches and planning shall focus both on theoretical benchmarks, particularly on the model of spiritual intelligence and, more specifically, on transcendental awareness, and on methodological benchmarks, comprising the teaching strategies guiding the educational approach aimed at developing intrinsic consciousness. For this investigative approach, a strategy is a construct consisting of a harmonious combination of learning tasks and methods used in shaping the personality to be self-aware and conscious of the components of the relationship with the surrounding world. Moreover, academics can apply these strategies both in a formal context, in the planning of lectures and seminars on academic subjects, and in a non-formal context, as part of continuing education activities.

Keywords: *intrinsic consciousness; principle; spiritual intelligence; strategy; transcendental awareness.*

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1. Introduction

A harmonious coexistence today requires an effective relationship between oneself and the surrounding world, involving consciousness in general and intrinsic consciousness, in particular. The development of intrinsic consciousness entails focusing on epistemological and methodological milestones in the training process. In this regard, the model of spiritual intelligence proposed by King and DeCicco (2009) becomes an essential epistemological landmark. The methodological guidelines imply a set of teaching strategies aimed at endowing a personality with a fully developed intrinsic consciousness.

2. Spiritual Intelligence: The Foundation of Intrinsic Consciousness

Intrinsic consciousness is a mental capacity which plays an important role in the training process. Therefore, intrinsic consciousness is approached as a principle deriving from the transcendental awareness dimension of spiritual intelligence (SQ). In King and DeCicco's (2009) view, spiritual intelligence comprises four core dimensions: critical existential thinking, personal meaning production, transcendental awareness, and conscious state expansion.

Critical existential thinking is the capacity to critically contemplate the meaning of life and other existential/metaphysical issues, such as reality, the universe, space, and time. Critical existential thinking pertains to any life issue, object, or event relevant to a person's existence. Koening et. al. (2000) defined it as "the quest for answers".

Personal meaning production is the capacity to derive a life purpose and personal meaning from the physical and mental context (Butnari, 2016, pp. 90-93; Butnari & Bîrnaz, 2018, pp. 198-202). Meddin (1998) defined personal meaning production as a principle of integrated organizing (or set of principles), which gives meaning to the relationship between the inner life and the external environment. Wong (1989) defined personal meaning production as an individually built cognitive system, equipped with personal meanings.

Transcendental awareness is the ability to identify transcendent or external dimensions of the self, of the others, and of the physical world (for example, non-materialism and interconnection) during normal states of consciousness (Butnari, 2016, pp. 90-93; Butnari, 2017, pp. 156-158). King and DeCicco (2009) noted that transcendental awareness describes successful individuals going beyond their limits via integrating individual goals with other more complex goals, such as family welfare, community,

humanity, the planet, and the cosmos. Similarly, Levenson (2009) described transcendental awareness as the ability to go beyond self-centred consciousness to see things with an elevated level of freedom.

Conscious state expansion is the ability to enter higher states of consciousness (e.g., cosmic consciousness). From the psychological point of view, the distinction between transcendental awareness and consciousness state expansion is motivated. Thus, while transcendental awareness occurs during wakefulness, the awareness of the consciousness state expansion implies the capacity to transcend the waking state and to go into deep spiritual states (Butnari & Bîrnaz, 2019, pp. 33-37).

Therefore, these dimensions encompass "a set of mental capacities that contribute to the awareness, integration and adaptive application of the nonmaterial and transcendent aspects of a person's existence, leading to such outcomes as deep existential reflection, enhancement of meaning, recognition of a transcendent self and the mastery of spiritual states" (King & DeCicco, 2009).

Transcendental awareness is the dimension of spiritual intelligence relating to the ability to identify transcendent or external dimensions of the self, of the others, and of the physical world (for example, non-materialism and interconnection) during normal states of consciousness.

Consciousness combines the intuitive or reflective knowledge that each person holds about his existence and the things he is surrounded by. According to Emmons (2000), *transcendence* is the basic dimension of spiritual intelligence, which involves overcoming physical matter and developing a deeper awareness of a divine being and oneself.

Wigglesworth (2012) described a system of skills that epistemologically underpins the concept of transcendental consciousness, referring to *self-awareness* and *universal awareness*.

Self-awareness comprises:

- individual worldview awareness;
- value awareness;
- inner thought complexity;
- self-awareness.

Universal awareness implies:

- awareness of interconnectedness;
- awareness of other worldviews;
- perception of space and time;
- awareness of limits/powers of human perception;
- awareness of spiritual laws.

Therefore, intrinsic consciousness rightfully receives the status of a principle.

3. The Principle of Intrinsic Consciousness

The principle of intrinsic consciousness focuses the instructional process on learning situations, which provide the students with the opportunity to establish linkages between themselves and the surrounding world via complex cognitive processes based on intuition.

The learning context established to achieve the principle of intrinsic awareness in students encompasses activities focused on analysis, synthesis, reflection, and imagination, embedded in processes relating to awareness, exploration, discovery, cause-effect, problem-solving, etc.

Analysis (analytical thinking) is a complex cognitive process consisting of abstractly separating a whole into its constituent parts to explore their particularities and their relationships (Landsheere & Landsheere, 1979).

The analysis requires a series of operations (Butnari & Bîrnaz, 2020, pp. 112-116) such as:

- identifying details/aspects of a situation/the subject/the problem.
- establishing the data/information essential for problem-solving.
- finding reasonable solutions to the problem and their timely transfer.

Synthesis (synthetic thinking) is a complex cognitive process entailing understanding the whole through identifying the structural and functional interrelationships between the parts of the system.

Therefore, synthesis involves a series of operations (Butnari & Bîrnaz, 2020, pp. 112-116), namely:

- perceiving objects/elements as system components.
- explaining the logical relationship of system components.
- correlating the underlying laws of the investigated system with new and varied conditions to generate novelty.

Reflection is the process of self-observation via complex mental processes, understanding one's emotions, goals, attitudes, and behaviours established through practice. Reflection enables us to better comprehend and enhance our strengths. It predisposes us to the introspection of values and continuous personal growth.

Thus, reflection implies a string of operations as:

- identifying the problem(s) that generated a particular situation.
- analysing the situation(s) objectively.

- becoming aware of the problem-solving aspects.
- drafting an action plan to tackle the issue.

Imagination is a conscious mental process by which ideas or images of previously non-experienced or perceived objects, events, relationships, attributes, or processes are evoked (Stoica-Constantin, 2004).

Imagination may involve a range of operations depending on the given situation. Therefore, processes such as agglutination, dimensional modification, multiplication, schematization, and analogy are applicable (Zlate, 2000).

Furthermore, a systemic approach to analysis, synthesis, reflection, and imagination in the training process contributes to the development of personality intrinsic consciousness.

4. Strategies for Stimulating Intrinsic Consciousness

In order to implement this principle, we recommend a series of strategies in the training process. By strategy we mean a construct which harmoniously combines the learning tasks and methods used to achieve the learning objectives.

Therefore, we hereby propose a set of strategies to foster the students' intrinsic consciousness in the academic subject "New Education", on the topic **"**Education for a Change and Values Development".

In order to develop intrinsic consciousness via analysis, we propose the "Line of Values Over a Specified Time" strategy. This strategy involves the analysis of the evolution of values in the individual's ontogenetic development.

Table 1. The "Line of Values Over a Specified Time" Strategy

The "Line of Values Over a Specified Time" Strategy
Strategy Implementation Algorithm: • Draw a straight line (the timeline). • Partition the line into age periods. • Write your age-specific values for the periods on the timeline. • Circle the common values of each age period. • Cross out the values that have disappeared over time. • Underline the values that have evolved, merged and shaped other values over time. • Argue the progression of your values over time.

Note: compiled by the authors.

The next cognitive process that stimulates intrinsic consciousness is synthesis. Therefore, we recommend the "Tree of Integrity" strategy. This strategy involves establishing your value system.

Table 2. The "Tree of Integrity" Strategy

The "Tree of Integrity" Strategy
Strategy Implementation Algorithm: • Draw a tree. • Write the circled values (from the timeline) on the roots, these are personal-fundamental values. • Write the underlined values (from) the timeline on the tree trunk, these are values that contribute to the development of one's personality. • Write on the branches the new values from the ones the tree trunk. • Argue the importance of compiling your value system.

Note: compiled by the authors.

Reflection is the cognitive process stimulating intrinsic consciousness and highlighting the aspects learned from one's value system aimed at perfection. In order to develop reflection, we recommend the "Mandala of Values" strategy. This strategy entails being aware of the functionality of one's value system. The Mandala is a series of circles and squares combined in numerous ways to generate a diagram, and it is often used as a means of concentration and meditation, and it is interpreted as a symbol of individuality in G. Jung's abyssal psychology (Popa et. al., 1993).

Table 3. The "Mandala of Values" Strategy

The "Mandala of Values" Strategy
Strategy Implementation Algorithm: • Draw five mandalas in order to represent the dimensions of self, family, community, humanity, and the universe. • Complete the mandalas with specific elements (drawings, words, pictures) of each dimension of your own vision. • For each mandala, write down the values you consider of great significance in harmonising and improving the quality of life. • Argue your own choice of values.

Note: compiled by the authors.

We propose the "Universe of Values" strategy to foster imagination. This strategy involves conveying the relationship between self and the universe.

Table 4. The "Universe of Values" Strategy

The "Universe of Values" Strategy
Strategy Implementation Algorithm: • Depict with a symbolic drawing your value system at present. • Add the universal values imperative of the time. • Draft an action plan to enhance the relationship between the self and the universe in the framework of the established value system.

Note: compiled by the authors.

Thus, in order to foster intrinsic awareness in students, it is necessary to tailor strategies so that they involve analysis, synthesis, reflection, and imagination in the personality shaping process.

5. Constraints and Discussions

The research at hand provides insights into intrinsic consciousness. The theoretical and methodological benchmarks on fostering intrinsic consciousness during the training process are thus identified.

The novelty of the research comprises:

- establishing the system of complex cognitive processes: analysis, synthesis, reflection, and imagination, as the core elements of intrinsic consciousness.

- establishing the required strategies to foster intrinsic consciousness during the training process.

Nevertheless, we would like to mention the constraints encountered during this research, the handling of which could streamline further research on this topic.

An essential constraint relating to the theoretical benchmarks is *the insufficiency of previous research on intrinsic consciousness*. Consequently, this has resulted in difficulties in the literature review process. Hence, we were able to identify only one theoretical model which focuses on fostering intrinsic consciousness, namely the spiritual intelligence model proposed by King and DeCicco (2009). For the effectiveness of the investigative approach in

further research on intrinsic consciousness, we recommend the meta-analysis of personality development in terms of philosophical, psychological, pedagogical, and social approaches. Moreover, we propose undertaking further research based on the theory-principles-strategies triad. Therefore, the triadic approach would come as an alternative research methodology.

Another constraint encountered during the research concerns *the timeframe of the research*. The request for the present research coincided with students' vacation, making it impossible to undertake the experimental aspect of the research. Thus, we have confined ourselves to the theoretical aspect of the research. An advantage of this research is complementing the theoretical study with a long-term practical study in order to generate a complex qualitative product on stimulating intrinsic consciousness.

In this regard, another constraint emerges, namely the *difficulty to draw conclusions on the research and outline the findings*. The lack of a sample of students during the research limits the possibility to extend the research findings to designing the educational approach based on the principle of intrinsic consciousness for all categories of students. Thus, we note that depending on the students' field of training, the strategies for stimulating intrinsic consciousness in students may differ in specificity/content. Moreover, we argue that the quantitative research would enhance the soundness of the research findings.

Furthermore, the specificity of the research sample generates a constraint relating to *the cultural context of the country*, meaning that there is a certain specificity of the cultural manifestation of values in accordance with the socio-cultural traditions of the peoples of a country. This very aspect impacts the stimulation of intrinsic consciousness in students in the environmental context, as it is shaped by a set of values specific to the socio-cultural environment. Consequently, it appears that the implementation of strategies for developing intrinsic consciousness at the international level can generate discussions on the need to extend the values analysis from personal to universal cultural levels.

The aforementioned limitations generate another constraint in terms of *the universal and sustainable specificity of the study*. The design of the long-term study on intrinsic consciousness, focusing on epistemological psycho-pedagogical landmarks, namely the meta-systems approach to self-awareness and knowledge, the ecology of communication and relationships, the management of the axiological dimension of behaviour, etc., would foster the professionalism of the teaching staff. This is made possible through shaping an integrated vision on the design and conduct of professional activities with a view to the development of intrinsic consciousness in

students, and manifested in their psychosocial behaviour corresponding to the current and prospective societal requirements.

6. Conclusions

- Spiritual intelligence is the theoretical underpinning of intrinsic consciousness.
- Intrinsic consciousness arises from self-awareness, awareness of the surrounding world and awareness of the relationship between the Self and the Universe.
- Intrinsic consciousness is developed based on four complex and consecutive cognitive processes, namely analysis, synthesis, reflection, and imagination, implemented during the learning process.
- The design of the educational approach, based on the principle of intrinsic consciousness, entails drafting and implementing a system of strategies aimed at personality development.

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