

THE POSSIBILITIES FOR COHERENCE OF AWARENESS AND TRANSCENDENCE IN EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

While the cognitive dimension is an inseparable part of the learning process, modern research has acknowledged the roles of affective and spiritual as being compatible within this process. Thus, stressing the interaction between teachers and students, the need for spiritually-based qualities in educational process emerges. Spirituality is the indwelled knowing of our self, the understanding of the highest transcendence-driven spiritual features. The underlying argument in favor of transcendence in education is that there can be no teaching without a notion of transcendence. The problem question asks what are the possibilities to develop the awareness, which is based on transcendental aspects, in an educational context. Based on these assumptions the objective of this presentation is to introduce the conceptual framework of the development of transcendental awareness.

Keywords: *transcendence, awareness, transformation, wisdom-based capacity.*

INTRODUCTION

Awareness more represents psychological, cognitive dimension of person's development (Toglia and Kirk, 2000; Crosson et.al., 1989; Tart, 1975). Though the notion of transcendence has been changed according to the questions and insights of the age (Du Toit, 2011; Ruschmann, 2011), transcendence is more often associated with religion as well as spirituality-based beliefs and faith. Spirituality as the individual expression with the highest human potential - transcendence - (Vaughan, 2002; Pergament, 1999) should not be equated with religion (Pergament, 1999; Sawatzky et al., 2005), especially in the context of intelligence (Zohar and Marshall, 2006). So, who can unite these different areas – awareness and transcendence – along with education? While the cognitive dimension is an inseparable part of the learning process, modern research has acknowledged the roles of affective and



even spiritual as being compatible within this process (Martišauskienė, 2014; Buchanan and Hyde 2008; Palmer, 1999). The issue of spirituality has been much contested subject within the field of education due to the shortage of scientific evidence. Prior studies have reported the importance of worth of the deepest questions of persons lives (Vaughan, 2002; Maslow, 1968) which leads education get out of “technical triviality” and even “cultural banality” (Palmer, 1999: 2). Several attempts have been made trying to shine new lights on spiritually-based disputes across education (Chaudhary and Aswal, 2013). Moreover, spiritually-based approach to didactics reveals that it include alive knowing which provides alive knowledge and indwelled capabilities leading to enlightened desire – learning (Šiaučiukėnienė et al., 2011). Such learning becomes an education when it encourages to the development of a whole person (Daukilas, 1999) through transformation of the Self (Nonaka et al., 2000). Thus, the evidence for spirituality and education relationship is undoubted.

Although some research separately has been carried out on revealing various results as well as possibilities of spiritual aspects in education, there are lack of studies that integrates issues of awareness along with transcendence. This paper offers some important insights into this field. The problem question asks what are the possibilities to develop the awareness, which is based on aspects of transcendence, in an educational context. Based on these assumptions the objective of this paper is to introduce the conceptual framework of the development of transcendence-based awareness.

The conceptual positions are based on:

- the perspective of existential spirituality (Matheis et al., 2006), which is driven on the pursuit of meaning and purpose;
- that the search for deeper awareness is essentially the search for person’s inner, authentic values. It means that improved self-knowledge with a clearer understanding of person’s own values relates to a better understanding of others and the common sense of reality with a clearer understanding of their values (Maslow, 2011).

The research method is the literature review which according Grant and Booth (2009: 97) “seeks to identify what has been accomplished previously, allowing for consolidation, for building on previous work, for summation, for avoiding duplication and for identifying omissions or gaps”.

This paper is composed of three parts. The first part reveals the difficulties trying to grasp the meaning of the word “awareness”. The second part highlights the sifting notion of transcendence. The third part reveals the principles of the construction of the conceptual framework of the development of transcendence-based awareness. The conclusions summarize the results of this discussion.

1.1. Trying to grasp the meaning of awareness

Issues of awareness are of interest not only in psychology (Toglia and Kirk, 2000; Crosson et al., 1989; Tart, 1975), but also in knowledge management (Nifco, 2005) as well as in education (Freeman, 1989; Armstrong, 1970). According to Crosson et al. (1989), awareness has three levels that are hierarchical, namely intellectual awareness, anticipatory awareness, and emergent awareness. Toglia and Kirk (2000) argues that the process of gaining awareness is caused by person’s metacognition, belief, values, context, i.e. the



knowledge is clearly distinguished only as a factor of this process. For Freeman, (1989) awareness refers to the capacity to recognize and control the attention person is giving. Tart (1975) states two approaches to awareness. First is based on a fundamental theoretical and experiential givens such as to know or sense or cognize or recognize. Second deals with the spiritual psychologies that sees awareness “...(at least partially) something from outside the workings of the brain” (Tart, 1975: 7). Such approach highlights that awareness has the feature of being beyond.

Thus, the meaning of word “awareness” is complicated. On the one hand, defining awareness as knowing feeling, experiencing, or noticing something, characterizes it by internal state, which provides a person a capacity for various behavioral expressions (Armstrong, 1970). In other words, awareness then is added under the headline of “sense-perception” (Whitehead, as cited in Mays, 2014: 173). On the other hand, awareness as “knowledge or perception of a situation or fact” (The Oxford dictionary) reveals that it can be concentrated on external events that are perceived by senses. However, Denbigh (2012) stress that a person can only possess a direct awareness of external events that happen at his/her present and such perception gets a character of that particular moment’s point.

The identification of awareness with knowledge is controversial too. The ontological, the epistemological, the commodity, and the community views of knowledge (Jakubik, 2007) explain such complexity. In a broader sense, knowledge through gathered facts, systematized information, and skills acquired through experience or education leading to the theoretical or practical understanding of a subject. Thus, knowledge frames conceptual structures (Von Glasersfeld, 1998) which along with attitudes, skills (Freeman, 1989) and meaning (Nifco, 2005) are triggered by awareness which is critical in learning. The definition, which captures deeper aspects of knowledge, presents Nonaka et al. (2000). According to these authors, knowledge is “a dynamic human process of justifying personal belief toward the truth” (2000: 7). Therefore, Snowden (2002) criticizes Nonaka’s et al. (2000) view of knowledge as “a thing to be managed” (p.18). While the process of creating knowledge presented by Snowden (2002) is focused on generating the conditions for the emergence of meaning, its construction is in the same way as Nonaka’s et al. (2000). Nevertheless, Nonaka’s et al. (2000) both epistemological and ontological views of knowledge is based on Polanyi’s (1970) epistemological dichotomy of explicit and tacit knowledge. Tacit knowledge, according to Polanyi (1970) upholds persons’ capacities to understand transcendence in the world and search for self-transcendence. While both tacit and explicit knowledge are fundamental to knowledge creation it becomes ongoing and self-transcending process (Nonaka et al., 2000). Indeed, such process reveals person’s journey which is first about shifting from the knowable to the unknown (Andersson and Kalman, 2010: 207). A person acquires new knowledge, even “self-transcending knowledge” (Scharmer, 2001) along with a new world-view in a new context that enables the transformation of the Self (Nonaka et al., 2000) with beneficial changes in being (Barnett, 2011).

Polanyi’s (1970) tacit knowledge, Nonaka’s et al. (2000) process of knowledge which is grounded on Eastern philosophical thoughts (Ba conceptualization), even Scharmer’s (2001) “self-transcending knowledge” suggest that the authors indirectly are talking about person’s inner quality, namely spirituality which is the essential understanding of the self and of the highest transcendence-driven spiritual features.



1.2. The sifting notion of transcendence

Hyper information and its abundance, hyper communication, hyper virtuality, lack of time for yourself as the results of the technological age opportunities with a thick layer covered one of the main values offered by spirituality to a person – transcendence. Although people cannot exist without transcendence, at the same time they try to keep it as deeply as possible and further away from themselves (Du Toit, 2011). If people forget their sense of spirituality and base their actions on other incentives, just as seeking power or fulfilling material needs, they put themselves into an “existential vacuum” (Langle et.al., 2003) which manifests itself as a lack of motivation, emptiness and meaninglessness. Wondering Taylor (2004) states that there is an “incredible achievement” (p. 5) that people have been able to create their lives without reference to certain sources of morality, but the age of postmodernism proves this.

Still, the human need for transcendence, albeit deeply concealed, did not disappear. According to Du Toit (2011), the radical interpretation of transcendence began in the 15th century together with the Science Revolution. The philosophical development of the notion of transcendence has increasingly shifted from the ontological perspective towards the epistemological (Ruschmann, 2011; Du Toit, 2011). Kant contributed most to this shift in order to end the “metaphysical speculations” (Du Toit, 2011: 5) and to create philosophy on a solid foundation. Moreover, Kant, using the Latin term *transcendens*, coined the new epistemology-based term *transcendental* which means “regarding the conditions of human cognitive processes and faculties” (Ruschman, 2011: 424). However, according to King (2008), this new word is more suitable for describing an understanding of what is transcendental. Moreover, the meaning of the word “transcendence” is twofold. According to Ruschmann (2011) in Latin and Greek this word can also refer to the process of transcending as going beyond, and what is the aim of this process reflecting the state of transcendence as being beyond.

Although the changes in the understanding of transcendence vary according to age and issues, its essence remains unchanged (Du Toit, 2011), i.e. more related to metaphysical aspects. Polanyi (1970), asking how the transcendence can be discovered in the world, points out that people cannot clearly convey their arguments on this issue, especially if their capacity to recognize abnormally intangible levels of experience is still reduced by empiricism. As a precondition for suicidal commitment to ultimate clarity, Polanyi (1970) suggested the theory of tacit knowledge, which through transcendence leads to self-transcendence.

1.3. The conceptual framework of the development of transcendence-based awareness

Based on the assumptions revealed in previous chapters the conceptual framework of the development of transcendence-based awareness is introduced (see Figure).

The unifying element of awareness and transcendence is self-transcendence. Different definitions of self-transcendence are presented in the literature, but they are similar due to the emphasis on the relationship with the dimension beyond self. Definitions of self-transcendence emphasize the capacity to extend self-boundaries (Reed, 2008; Reker and Fry, 2003). Some authors (Piedmont, 1999) consider self-transcendence as a personality trait that



can be justified on empirical research (Osin et.al., 2016). Other authors (Reed, 2008; Levenson et. al., 2005; Langle et. al., 2003; Maslow, 1971) see self-transcendence as the result of a human developmental process. According to Reed (2009) self-transcendence involves behaviors and views that are both psychological which refers to relation with others and self and spiritual which refers to having a sense of meaning, acceptance, and living fully in the present. Self-transcendence is as if shared core feature which unites awareness and transcendence.

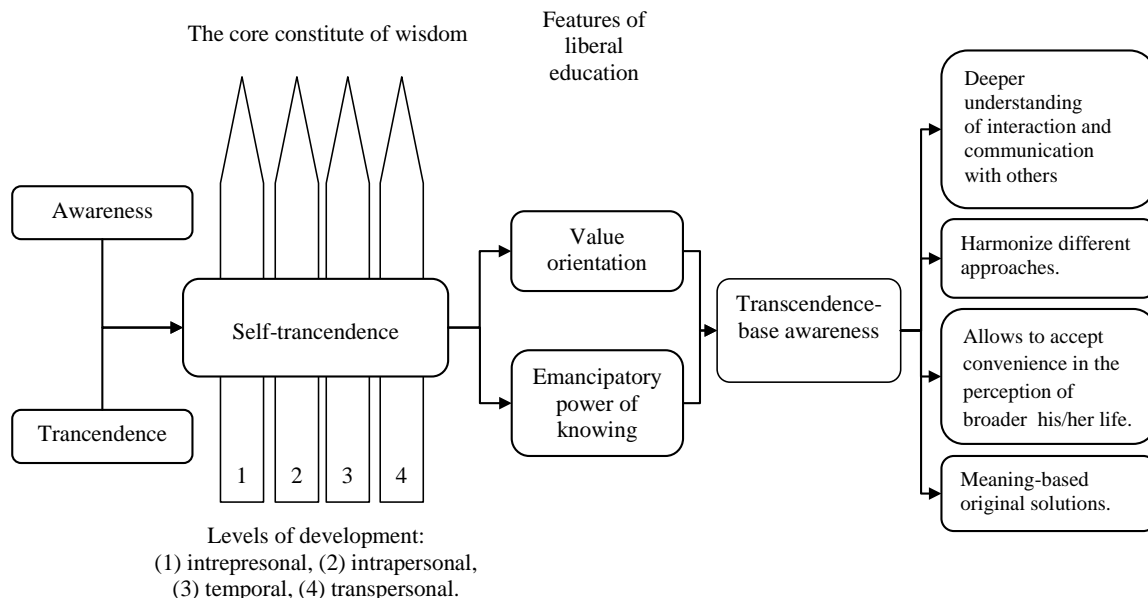


Figure. The conceptual framework of the development of transcendence-based awareness.

Self-transcendence is the core element of wisdom. Self-transcendence can be expressed in a variety of behavioral perspectives and one of them is the sharing of wisdom with others (Reed, 2008; 2009). This aspect reveals the close relationship between self-transcendence and wisdom. Stenberg (1998) refers to self-transcendence as the essential factor in the theory of balanced wisdom, which, moreover, is based on the theory of Polanyi's tacit knowledge. Curnow (1999) identifies it with "practical wisdom". Whereas wisdom is concerned with existential issues (Peschl, 2007) through including not only knowing and knowledge, but also traditions, moral and ethical values, allows a learner to make solutions that are oriented towards the proper conduct of an action (Aramavičiūtė, 2016). It implies that the notion of wisdom "goes far beyond the cognitive and classical knowledge domain" (Peschl, 2007: 138).

Self-transcendence reflects emancipatory power of knowing. The construct of self-transcendence could be compared with Habermas (2005: 314) coined term "the emancipatory interest of knowledge". According to Habermas (2005), the methodological system, which determines the significance of the validity of critical claims, is based on self-reflection, which frees consciousness from its dependence on hypostasis. Self-reflection as the emancipator factor in human activity, which results in accumulation and dissemination of experience through emancipated argumentative practice, reflects the transformation of personality through the process of education (Čiučiulkienė and Bankauskienė, 2015). In other words, such emancipation reflects the purposeful developmental pathway where the main objective is liberation (Levenson et al., 2005). Emancipatory power of knowing reveals one of the essence



aspects of the liberal education. It seeks for Newman's (1992) proposed thinking carefully leading to the enlargement of the mind which reflects the extending self-boundaries (Reed, 2008; Reker and Fry, 2003) by gaining a joined view or grasp of things from different world-view. Indeed, this transformation-based enlargement as liberation by indwelled knowing based on mindfulness (Ruendy and Schweitzer, 2010) must be driven by personal values.

Self-transcendence highlights the value orientation. Therefore, recognizing that people are "a special objective area of knowledge" (Gutting, 2005: 14) opens up the path to the reinforcement of human values in an emancipatory power of knowing. Upon the discovery of values, the orientation toward emancipation is indirectly expressed in the norms of effective communication (Habermas, 2005). In addition, Schwartz (2012) points out self-transcendence as a value orientation based on human decisions and actions towards benevolence and versatility, since values create a permanent motivational continuum. Indeed, fostering values through continuous development of self-transcendence leads to meaning-based original solutions.

The developmental levels of self-transcendence. According to Reed (2008), the development of self-transcendence has four levels: intrepresonal, intrapersonal, temporal, and transpersonal. The development of self-transcendence begins at the intrepresonal level. Learner founds and fosters the values, creates his/her personal philosophy of life along with hopes and visions what are the ground of their ways of thinking and evaluation of the self and others. The next level in the development of self-transcendence involves intrapersonal relationships, i.e. the interaction of a learner with the world and interaction with people around him/her. The third level is temporal which indicates that a learner on his/her own developmental pathway is capable on a continuum-based self-improvement through the capability to integrate past experience and future perspectives in life (Reed, 2008; 2009). The fourth level is transpersonal. Human beings, as related to different aspects of reality, have the capacity to relate to dimensions that are beyond the boundaries of a universally recognized world and this means a way of expanding the human "spiritual psyche" (Reed, 2008; 2009). In other words, it indicates that it is important for a person to become aware of him/her self.

The results of the development of transcendence-based awareness. Assumptions presented in previous chapters helps to justify the main argument that teaching leading to real education must be driven with the notion of transcendence. Biesta (2011: 363), based on Todd's, Levin's, Kierkegaard thoughts, claims that the notion of teaching is based not just about transferring learners with something they do not yet know. Indeed, it is about presenting learners with something that really transcends what they already know (ibid). Obviously, this is true, but difficult to implement.

The possibility arises when we look from the new perspective. The levels of self-transcendence development could help learners to discover their roots that are laden on personal philosophies, value-based world-views they believe in and foster. Such roots are based on existential thinking which along with critical thinking acquired through search of emancipator based knowing will help to grasp things both material and implicit by leaping out of traditional thinking and perceptions of this world. Only then learners transforming their current knowing which is grounded by this world will be enable to see broader meaning-based world and find the new Self. Therefore, such acquired new transformed range of knowing, experiences, and being leads to transcendental awareness which, according King (2008), is one of spiritual intelligence's levels. In other words, the learner must be taught to learn to discover himself/herself seeking for a transformation of the Self. The transformation of this



existential dimension reflects triple-loop learning (Peschl, 2007) also implies for the necessity that education must be driven with the notion of transcendence. Indeed, perception of expanding boundaries of the Self then reflects deeper understanding of interaction and communication with others, enables to harmonize different approaches from various perspectives and to find meaning-based original solutions, allows to accept convenience in the deeper perception of broader to his/her life.

CONCLUSIONS

Self-transcendence which is the core constitutive of wisdom and reflects emancipatory power of knowing unites awareness and transcendence.

The development of transcendence-based awareness as emancipator factor of learner's activity that results in the accumulation and dissemination of both tacit and explicit knowledge and experience reflects a transformation of personality through the process of education.

The elements of transcendence-based awareness lead to the wisdom-based capacity, which must be developed through the intrapersonal, interpersonal, temporal, and transpersonal levels of learner's.

Teaching is based with a notion of transcendence when learners are taught to learn to open minds to new experiences and knowing by leaping out of traditional thinking and perceptions of this world. The transformation of the Self enables to see the same something at 360 degrees.



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