

Vladimir A. Fomichov and Olga S. Fomichova

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The Peculiarities of the Mindfulness-Based Development of the Personality under the Frame of Cognitonics

Vladimir A. Fomichov* and **Olga S. Fomichova****

* Department of Innovations and Business in the Sphere of Informational Technologies

Faculty of Business Informatics

National Research University Higher School of Economics

Kirpichnaya str. 33, 105187 Moscow, Russia and IIAS

** State Educational Center “Dialogue of Sciences”, Universitetsky prospect 5,

119296 Moscow, Russia and IIAS

vfomichov@hse.ru and vfomichov@gmail.com

Abstract

The paper sets forth the deep connections of cognitonics with the positive psychology movement. Cognitonics is a new scientific discipline aiming at compensating the negative shifts in the cognitive-emotional development of personality and society caused by stormy progress of information and communication technologies and globalization processes. The positive psychology movement fulfills a shift from the accent on repairing weakness to the enhancement of positive qualities of the personality and preventing the problems before the moment when these problems arise. The publications on positive psychology allow for distinguishing a factor being especially beneficial to well-being, this factor is called mindfulness. Generalizing a number of available definitions of this concept, mindfulness can be characterized as the ability to maximally proceed from the context while taking decisions in any situations. It is shown that cognitonics suggests a system of original, mindfulness-based educational methods supporting effective cognitive-emotional development of the personality in modern information society.

Keywords: positive psychology movement; mindfulness-based educational program; cognitonics; early socialization; theory of dynamic conceptual mappings; methods of emotional-imaginative teaching

1. Introduction

Digital space should be subjected to the living space, digital society to the society, and

there should be a balance in value between society/digital society and environment in the world's conceptual picture of the humans. The priority of the human values and spirituality in the digital epoch is obvious. That is why not only environment should be a counterbalance to the digital world. The process of decision making should be influenced in such a way as to make young people and people in general clearly see the priority of happiness and emotional-spiritual development with respect to pleasure and intellectual development.

This paper describes important aspects of solving this problem with the help of education. The stated ideas well tested in practice are provided by our Theory of Dynamic Conceptual Mappings (the DCM-theory) and the System of Methods of Emotional-Imaginative Teaching (the EIT-system). Now the DCM-theory and the EIT-system form a principal part of the constructive core of the new scientific discipline – Cognitonics. It aims at compensating the negative shifts in the cognitive-emotional development of personality and society caused by stormy progress of information and communication technologies (ICT) and globalization processes (Fomichov and Fomichova, 2006, 2012).

The paper sets forth deep connections of the DCM-theory and the EIT-system with the positive psychology movement. This movement fulfills a shift from the accent on repairing weakness to the enhancement of positive qualities of the personality and preventing the problems before the moment when these problems arise. The publications on positive psychology allow for distinguishing a factor being especially beneficial to well-being, this factor is called mindfulness. Generalizing a number of available definitions of this concept, mindfulness can be characterized as the ability to maximally proceed from the context while taking decisions in any situations. It is shown in the paper that the EIT-system belongs to the mindfulness-based educational programs and, as it seems, provided the first program of the kind.

2. Positive Psychology Movement and Mindfulness-Based Education

During the 1990s, it was possible to observe the steady growth of the number of children at school age in the developed countries encountering various social, emotional, and behavioral problems. Numerous observations provide the possibility to conjecture that, to a large extent, it was a consequence of more intensive interaction with computers at lessons and at home and of stormy Internet's expansion. Besides, the

criminal films and horror films continued to negatively influence the mental state of very many children and adolescents, in particular, causing anxiety and aggression. These negative shifts became sufficiently noticeable by the beginning of the 2000s.

As a way out, many psychologists indicated the importance of promoting children's social and emotional experience in schools. As a consequence, a new paradigmatic shift was observed in psychology: a shift from the accent on repairing weakness to the enhancement of positive qualities and preventing the problems before the moment when these problems arise (Seligman and Csikszentimihalyi, 2000). As a result, the positive psychology movement was born, the principal objective of this movement is studying the positive features of human development, in particular, investigating such significant traits of the person as "subjective well-being, optimism, happiness, and self-determination (Seligman and Csikszentimihalyi, 2000, p. 9).

As a logical consequence, the task of promoting positive emotions in children and adolescents was posed (Huebner and Gilman, 2003). The evidence obtained in the 2000s shows that a critical role in the success of children in school and in their social and emotional competence is played by self-regulation, in particular, by controlling attention and inhibiting aggressive reactions. The publications on positive psychology allow for distinguishing the next factor being beneficial to well-being, this factor is called mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). According to the definition given in (Schonert-Reichl and Lawlor, 2010), it is a way of directing attention. Generalizing a number of available definitions of this concept, mindfulness can be characterized as the ability to maximally proceed from the context while taking decisions in any situations. It is the ability of paying attention to many details while elaborating a decision but not only "mechanically" following a number of prescribed rules, etc.

3. The Reasons for Early Children's Socialization in Information Society

A number of phenomena caused by ICT can be interpreted as negative shifts in the development of the personality in information society. A considerable part of information distributed via Internet is false, but this false information is "injected" into the net by concrete people. Very many high school students and university students don't feel the value of a thought generated by another person and use in their works the ideas, methods, models belonging to another people. Acting in this way is very easy, because even middle grades possess the well-developed skills of using e-mail, Internet,

cell telephones. However, they are not socially mature and are not ready to suffer all the consequences of their deeds. A new, tragic phenomenon of information society is cyberbullying. The cell telephones, profile home pages, and social networking services are a breeding-ground for cyber-bullying in some countries. The other negative deeds are the attacks of young hackers against computer systems of socially very significant objects and military objects.

The common reason for all considered negative deeds is that children possess very high skills of using ICT but are very far from being socially mature and from being aware of own social responsibility. Young children and teenagers usually can't clearly understand the severity of their actions many times multiplied by the power of modern ICT. That is why we believe that a possible way out is to elaborate the methods of much earlier socialization of the child than it is usually done in order, on the one hand, to eliminate or considerably diminish children's aggressiveness. On the other hand, for contributing to the birth in children of the feeling of social responsibility and to the understanding by children of the severe consequences suffered by their peers and adults.

4. Expansion of the Levels of Consciousness Basic Model by the Theory of Dynamic Conceptual Mappings

It seems that the model proposed in (Zelazo, 2004) can be considered as a good working instrument for studying the development of conscious control during the first – fourth years of childhood. This model, called the Levels of Consciousness (LOC) model, emerged as a result of reflecting the experimentally discovered regularities of the development of conscious control of thought, action, and emotion. The model describes four transitions from one LOC to another, higher LOC, they depend on age. Let us say about the zero LOC in case of newborn babies and very young children at the age less 11 – 12 months.

It appears that the broadly felt necessity of promoting children's emotional and social competence in schools and the lack in the scientific literature of rather simple solutions to this problem (see Schonert-Reichl and Lawlor, 2010) are the grounds for putting forward the following conjecture: the LOC model proposed in (Zelazo, 2004) indicates only some basic stages of consciousness development. The goal of creating appropriate theoretical foundations of promoting children's emotional and social competence will lead to discovering higher stages of the child's consciousness development

corresponding to mature emotional and social competence of the child.

Realizing this idea, let's give a new interpretation of the methods of developing conscious control of thought, action, and emotion described in (Fomichov and Fomichova, 1997, 1998, 2006, 2012; Fomichova, 2009; Fomichova and Fomichov, 2009) and belonging to the System of the Methods of Emotional-Imaginative Teaching. We'll suppose that these methods underpin the transition from the level of consciousness 4 (LOC 4) to LOC 5, from LOC 5 to LOC 6, and from LOC 6 to LOC 7. The new levels LOC 5, LOC 6, and LOC 7 will be respectively called *the level of broad beauty appreciation*, *the level of appreciating the value of thought*, and *the level of enhanced awareness of social agreements and social responsibility*.

A very short description of these levels is as follows. Reaching LOC 5 by the person means that this person possesses a well-developed feeling of beauty in various manifestations: the beauty of a thing, of an idea, of an expression, of a picture or sculpture, of the interpersonal relationships, etc. (Fomichov and Fomichova, 1997, 1998; Fomichova, 2009; Fomichova and Fomichov, 2009). The successful transition from LOC 5 to LOC 6 means that (a) a child is aware of the fact that his/her ideas may be socially significant, i.e. the child may be appraised by the friends or adults for the originality and beauty of his/her idea; (b) a child appreciates the value of the thoughts of other persons (Fomichov and Fomichova, 2006; Fomichova and Fomichov, 2000). Reaching LOC 7 by a person means that this person is sufficiently mature in the social sense, i.e. possesses an enhanced awareness of social agreements and social responsibility (Fomichov and Fomichova, 2012).

It should be underlined that modern preschool and school educational systems in various countries encourage only a rather small proportion of children to reach the 5th, 6th, and 7th levels of conscious control. However, to considerably increase this proportion is vitally important for successful socialization of children in information society. Happily, at least one broadly applicable way of solving this problem has been available since the 1990s, it is given by the EIT-system. The papers (Fomichov and Fomichova, 1997, 1998) give the reasons for believing that the EIT-system provided the first mindfulness-based educational program.

5. A Glimpse at the New Approach: How to Imbibe the Spirit of Own Culture

The main questions defining the notion ‘culture’ for children and adolescents are “What you value, what you believe, how you act?”. Culture peculiarities considerably influence the process of decision making. The culture is symbolic in its origin. The EIT-system is underpinned by an original symbolic approach to teaching the languages of painting, dancing, music, poetry. This symbolic approach is the basis of an original interdisciplinary course. This course is underpinned by the idea of the so called “inverse perspective” (as in Russian icons) focused on a student, on his/her conceptual picture of the world, the system of values. This approach helps the students to better understand the ties between the world around and his/her personality, to re-estimate something, clarify something in his/her conceptual picture of the world. It improves the information processing ability (keeping in mind that we live in the digital world) and enhances sound creativity underpinned by human values, the aspiration to act and think in terms of public good, benefit to the society,

For example, dancing is a very special art. It helps to establish ties between different cultures and better understand own culture. The way one moves to the music, the expression of the face, the position of the hands, of the head, the interaction in pair makes one feel own identity. Waltz, for example, can be a metaphor of life: one can dancing slowly or swiftly. The way one dances depends on the partner: if one is sure in the partner and both are skillful enough, and they have enough space to dance, it is possible to change the figures of the dance. It is not only possible but it is recommended to add more figures, to expand steps of the waltz, and make the flight on the pair irresistible. That makes the waltz splendid, and the pairs experience the height of bliss and inspiration, the height of creativity, and the moment of co-creation.

In order to imbibe the spirit of the culture, a child (adolescent) should be brought up with the developed sense of beauty and have a sophisticated look to appreciate subtle, intrinsic beauty of the world around (Fomichova and Fomichov, 2009).

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