

## Consciousness based education approaches for developing effective inclusive solutions for UN SDGs

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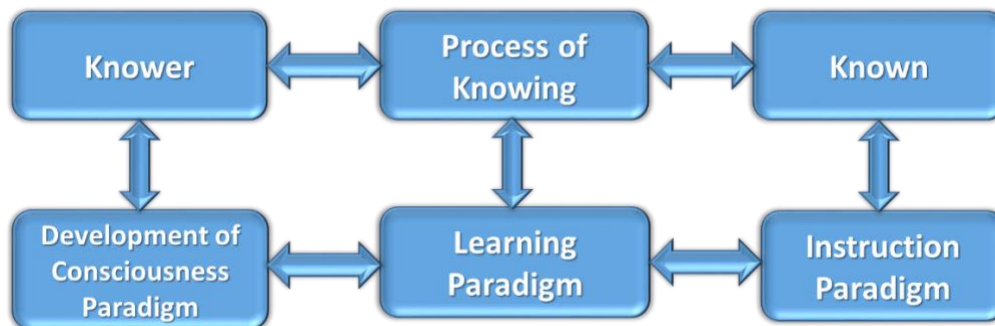
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We begin this paper by presenting briefly what Consciousness Based Education is.

### Consciousness-based Education

Consciousness-Based education (Schmidt-Wilk, Heaton & Steingard, 2000) (CBE) is an integrated approach which combines both experience and understanding of wholeness and connectedness. Based on the teachings of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (1963), CBE is a "Development of Consciousness" paradigm of education (Llewellyn & Pearson, 2011). It places primary emphasis on the knower, i.e., on developing the knower's potential for learning from within (Figure 1). In comparison, the Learning paradigm focuses on improving the student's process of knowing/learning, while the Instruction paradigm focuses on efficiently communicating the known/knowledge to the students.

**Figure 1: Paradigms of Education (Source: Llewellyn & Pearson, 2011)**



CBE aims at the enlightenment and full flowering of the human potential (Grant, 1998). CBE essentially takes seriously the Socratic exhortation of 'Know Thyself', as a pre-requisite to learning about and living joyfully in the external world. CBE helps students become active learners and take full ownership of their own principles and practices and develop their creative capacity. CBE adds four basic components to the standard disciplines of the school or university curriculum: (1) courses on consciousness for direct experience and intellectual understanding; (2) study of the standard disciplines in light of the knowledge of the full potential of consciousness; (3) teaching and curriculum practices that holistically develop the personality toward more expanded levels of awareness; and (4) a healthy, stress-free routine and nourishing environment. CBE

paradigm proposes that all knowledge is integrated in the consciousness of the student/learner/knower. The experiential aspect of CBE includes cultivating holistic awareness through the practice of Transcendental Meditation (TM) and its advanced techniques. The intellectual aspect connects all knowledge to the unified field of natural law, as understood by quantum physics and Vedic Science, and connects to one's own experience of pure consciousness.

Consciousness is defined simply as that which is conscious of itself: it is primary, self-referral and self-sufficient (Nader, 2015). Consciousness is not an emergent property of matter that comes into existence through the functioning of the human nervous system. Instead, Consciousness is a quantum phenomenon that is the field of infinite correlations and has been proposed to be the unified field of all the laws of nature (Hagelin, 2008). As explained by Hagelin and Herriott in 1991 ("Unified Field Based Economics - Hagelin - MUM - [PDF Document]" 2022), theories in quantum physics have described the complete unification of all particles and forces of nature in a single unified field. From analysis of the self-interacting, self-sufficient, and infinitely dynamic characteristics of the unified field, Hagelin and Herriott have proposed that the unified field being investigated today by modern science is the same field known by Vedic Science for thousands of years as pure consciousness:

The discovery of a unified field of consciousness at the foundation of conscious experience has prompted the proposal that this unified field of consciousness and the unified field of modern theoretical physics are identical, providing a possible framework for a completely unified understanding of both subjective and objective existence. (1991, p. 56).

### **Studies in CBE**

Consciousness Eased Education (CBE) involves expanding the container of the mind where the student or learner experiences an expansion of consciousness from the surface level of thinking to finer levels of thought and transcending or going beyond even the finest level. This experience involves a technique of Transcendental Meditation (TM) which has been found to develop the conscious thinking capacity of the mind to improve cognitive abilities such as problem solving, creativity and higher order thinking. The practice of Transcendental Meditation has also been shown by around 700 studies much of which has been published in peer reviewed studies to indicate improvements in cognitive and personal psychological abilities. The practice of TM does not involve any religious, philosophical, or mind control techniques. On the contrary, it is practiced innocently and effortlessly. The technique originates from the ancient Vedic tradition where Veda means knowledge. It is purely experiential yet empirically able to be validated on both an individual and group level. Consciousness Based Education has been introduced into the curriculum Maharishi International University in Fairfield, Iowa, the USA and accredited by the Higher Learning Commission in the United States.

Examples of such studies are as follows.

Increased intelligence, improved problem solving and wisdom in 2001 (So, 2001), involved three randomized studies with TM and two control techniques. Results showed improvements in cognition compared to the other techniques. Subjects were 362 high school students in Taiwan in a longitudinal study where TM showed significant improvements in creative thinking, constructive thinking and higher cognition in group embedded figures testing for field independence and reduction in anxiety. Intelligence was also measured using culture fair tests and inspection time. Other studies have shown improved emotional intelligence and reduced perceived stress amongst 96

randomly assigned central school staff in San Francisco. The TM program was effective as a workplace wellness program to improve emotional intelligence and reduce perceived stress in employees ((Valosek et al. 2018). Brainwave changes by EEG and have shown improved responses to stress amongst students (Travis, 2009). Research at American University indicated meditating students with better reactions to stress, were less fatigued, and with more 'integrated' brains. In 2021, A Study in Mexico, showed intellectual ability, personal well-being, and academic performance improving significantly among Mexican high school student practicing TM compared to controls over 9 months overs by standardized tests. Yet another study indicated reduced psychological stress and improved academic achievement in high school students with TM in a randomized controlled study (Valosek et al., 2021).

The experience of transcending to find and final level of the thinking process is commonly described by practitioners of TM all over the world regardless of ethnicity, religious orientation, gender, nationality, or culture. Oftentimes it seems to be an experience that is innocent independent of any belief system and even in its absence. The word transcends simply means to go beyond in Transcendental Meditation means to go beyond thinking. The technique itself has its origins in the ancient *Veda* which means knowledge in *Sanskrit*. Yet it has withstood the test of time rediscovered by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and has been amenable to 700 studies of scientific research with more research being conducted every year. Experiencing transcending is a delicate and effortless process where the mind begins to settle down with more restful states of physiology being correlated; deep-rooted stresses are simultaneously released. There is an integration of mind and body in a state of permanent restful alertness. The landmark study in 1972 dubbed transcendental consciousness or Being: the 4th state of consciousness this thing from waking sleeping and dreaming as a wakeful hypermetabolic state (Benson and Wallace, 1972). From the discussion above we can begin to sense that we live in an age of increasing complexity and volatility.

### **Our Era of Discontinuous Change**

This era has been characterized by what is called VUCA which means volatility, uncertainty complexity and ambiguity (Mackey 2022) (Mackey, 1992, 2022). Other writers such Thomas Friedman have presented a scenario of accelerating change drivers in his book Thank You for Being Late in 2016 punctuated by technological innovations and the marked anxiety of climate change (Friedman, 2017).

In their seminal paper at the turn of the 20th century Weick and Quinn (1999) wrote of the nature of discontinuous and continuous change in Organizational Change and Development. They proposed two analytical frameworks for continuous change and discontinuous change which can also be manifested as disruption. This analytic framework suggests different approaches in change management interventions, leadership, and management styles. The two analytical frameworks from continuous and discontinuous change demand different approaches in strategy. Continuous change is smooth and characterized by incremental changes, consensus building, the clarification of values towards a Confucian wholeness in harmony. The tone of leadership this characterized by the law of attraction. It is idealized. Discontinuous change is episodic, abrupt, sometimes punctuated by brief periods of res or stability. The tone of leadership and management however is driven by urgency and resource allocation.

We live in a world today where VUCA, discontinuous and disruptive change, accelerating change, involve political, economic shifts, the rise of new power structures in different parts of the world, challenges to pre-existing paradigms of governance, political systems, religious systems, in the post-colonial era with the rise of emerging

economies, climate change and numerous challenges to our environment. Education for sustainable development must also include addressing progressive technological change drivers in the age of discontinuous, disruptive, and accelerating change in the 4th Industrial Revolution (4th IR), ("The Fourth Industrial Revolution, By Klaus Schwab" 2022).

We propose that an education system that incorporates TM into the curriculum where students practice daily morning and evening helps develop the full mental potential of the students and develops the ability to manage stress effectively. Education that develops not just cognitive abilities but holistic resilience to these accelerating change and volatility in the environment. This must be accompanied by the ability to widely comprehend diversity, and be able to zoom into details of problems, appreciating and evaluating nuance by heightened emotional intelligence in an increasingly interconnected world. Such an approach is CBE. CBE involves transcending. Transcending involves diving deeper inwards into the mind into the core of our being. The process of transcending is described as follows.

When the mind transcends from the surface level of thinking in TM it begins to experience more refined layers of consciousness, more subtler levels of the thinking process experienced and characterized by deeper thinking involving the assumptions behind concepts, theories, and even paradigms. We may even become consciously aware of our paradigms that shape our assumptions which in turn shape our theories (Kuhn 2007).

In our increasingly interconnected world of accelerating change, it is natural there will be conflicts. Oftentimes we hear comparisons of religion, economic systems, political systems, and judgments are induced even if we are not inclined to want to compare and judge others. How do we deal with such a world where we are forced to make decisions that will be impacting not just our own lives but lives around the world because of the nature of accelerating globalization and ecological changes?

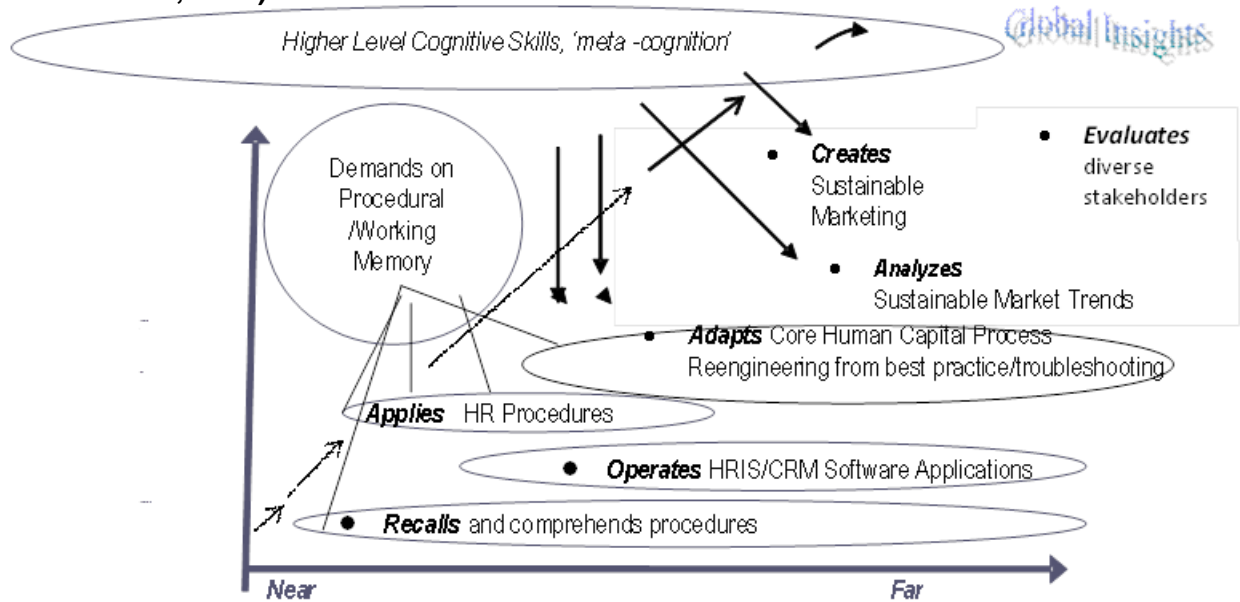
Transcendence can be described as in a state of unbounded consciousness that is universal at the source of thought. The experience of transcending TM into quieter levels of to the mind to a field of 'pure consciousness' beyond all thinking helps access the *pre-paradigm* state of unbounded existence, often described in traditional literature as the Self, which is universal as well as being the basis of designing new and more effective paradigms that harmoniously frame economic, political, cultural, spiritual, and other approaches to sustainability.

TM thus helps expand the mind as the container of knowledge and the ability to process diverse phenomena efficiently and creatively. Recent cases in Europe involving the practice of TM in Quiet Time programs in schools for the development of emotional intelligence, inclusivity and appreciation of diversity have shown promising results in Portugal, Netherlands, and Sweden. The quiet time program involving TM involved hundreds of teachers, principals, parents, and students. The project was co-funded by the Erasmus + Program of the European Union to enhance emotional intelligence, inclusion of diversity and unity has been shown to be promising to ensure tolerance and respect.

Higher order thinking (HOTS) which is critical for appreciating diversity and integrating differences is developed through Transcendental Meditation? The ability to transcend has been systematically correlated to discriminating, synthesizing, and unifying diversity in higher order thinking for example in by Gurubatham (Gurubatham 2014, 2018). CBE facilitates the development of HOTS involving the process of the 'high road' transfer of learning into diverse applications, from current research in metacognition and TM. TM enhances HOTS in the learner to process data into information, transforming information

into knowledge then culminating in wisdom. An example of an experience of meditating is presented below by a brief testimony of a meditating student

**Figure. 2 HOTS and Transfer Model Involving TM as Metacognition. (Source:M. Gurubatham , 2014)**



HOTS impacts the ability to transfer learning from one environment to another such that it is dubbed 'far transfer' (Royer, 1979). Superficial, and narrow learning results in 'near transfer' where the consequences of learning and their impacts are superficial and localized. Far transfer extends to system wide impacts. Including and beyond organizations, its industry, beyond industries, and the ecological textures of a global environment. The mechanics of far transfer involving metacognition involved higher road strategies which involve metacognition or 'high road' learning (Salomon and Perkins 1989), such as thinking about thinking. In the case of TM, the practice is experienced as not just reflecting on the thinking process of our experience, but the mind transcends or goes beyond even the finest level of thought to the source of thought often dubbed as pure consciousness, the wakeful hypermetabolic state discovered and reported by Benson and Wallace (1972), above, traditionally dubbed as the transcendental Self beyond the ego but that which is Being. We can label it here as the *source of thought* to facilitate our understanding of an awareness beyond even the finest level of thought. Hence TM transcends all layers of reflection into the source of even reflection to its source, which is pure consciousness at the source of thought. Data is transformed into information, into knowledge, and through it too communicating in wisdom. Default industrial revolution is not just about digitalization and they've been quote iav data but the interpretation of data with insights. High order thinking is necessary for leveraging all insights hidden in the data. From consumer interests, being translated into desires, and consumption patterns impacting climate change data has to be interpreted to unlock the insights that will drive strategic change and policy.

### **Transcending Experience Example**

An example of a meditating graduate Muslim student from the Maldives brings flesh and blood to the abstract description. Even the growth towards Unity is characterised by glimpses of unification and exaltation in consciousness (Gurubatham, 2014) in the experience of transcendence, self-exploration, and fluidity in perceptions of unity in diversity. It is noteworthy she was meditating for less than a year:

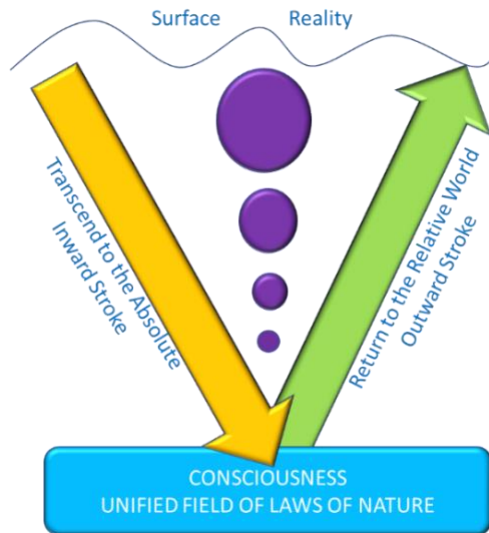
“...Now after several months of meditation, I am more lively, energetic and happy. I feel light and it's easier for me to concentrate and be attentive. I feel more motivated and hopeful towards life. On a second note, I noticed just after I meditate all my senses are sharper. The moment I open my eyes, I see things more clearly, as if I'm seeing for the first time. I take a deep breath and feel fresh air spill my lungs and I feel so great to be alive. I feel thankful for being me and appreciate every little thing that has made me who I am. The positive energy and *clear consciousness and relating to the inner Being help me see the world in a different way and appreciate life*. That makes me treat others and everything around me in a caring and loving way because *the enlightened state of mind is awakened to appreciate and care for every little thing in my surrounding. I feel responsible and connected to all life on earth...*”

### **V-theory of Transcendence**

In concluding, natural law principles inherent in CBE yield applications in teaching data analytics, big data, and many other courses - using the V theory of transcendence to connect within one's own consciousness. These fundamentally wider, deeper, and long-range consciousness-based approaches for education and management are essential to achieve and fulfil the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Transcendence is the way to reach TC and higher states of consciousness. Transcendence can be defined as a way of going beyond surface reality and accessing pure consciousness. *Yoga Sutras* define the path to union with consciousness, Transcendence can lead to a direct perception of oneself as beyond space, time, form, function, thoughts, and objects. Comparable to and building upon the U-theory of managing from emergence (Scharmer, 2009), the V-theory of transcendence (Maheshwari, 2021) is a relatively simple two-step model that helps connect the surface reality of discrete elements with the absolute oneness of pure consciousness (Figure 2).

**Figure 3: V-Theory: A 2-step model of Transcendence (Source: Maheshwari, 2021)**



In this perspective, one normally lives in a surface-level reality of waking/sleeping/dreaming. Using a suitable contemplative practice, or a *yogic* meditation such as Transcendental Meditation (TM), one can transcend to pure consciousness at the bottom of the V. That is called the inward stroke. During transcending, thoughts and the awareness of those thoughts, just dissolve away until they disappear completely. One should stay at that level of consciousness for a certain duration and take in pure coherence. Then one can suitably and effortlessly return to the surface-level reality. That is called the outward stroke. One may experience greater alertness, energy, clarity, enthusiasm, and creativity upon returning to the surface reality or waking mode (So, 2001).

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