

# Transpersonally Informed Educational Projects for an Emerging Authentic Integral Consciousness

Proyectos Educativos de Espectro Transpersonal, para una  
Auténtica Consciencia Integral Emergente

PatriziaTrotta\*

Varese, Italy

## Abstract

**Introduction:** This article discusses transpersonally-informed education for an emerging new consciousness found in so-called Indigos, as well as other multi-labeled youth, the New Generations, who appear to manifest Indigo-like characteristics (intuitive tendencies, sustainability consciousness and inner locus of control, among others). **Objective:** The study aimed to investigate any potential contributions that the latest trends found in psychosynthesis-based educational projects might offer both holistic and mainstream education. **Methodology:** Both the New Generations and psychosynthesis-based educational projects were the focus of two inter-related studies, the second of which, based on multiple case study research, is detailed in the present article. **Results:** Results indicate that psychosynthesis in education, particularly through the emerging field of psychoenergetics, has the potential to meet the needs highlighted by traits and tendencies found in the New Generations. The aims of psychoenergetics also appear to be in line with the needs and trends highlighted by educational futures research. **Conclusion:** The study results inform holistic and mainstream education, as well as policy makers, hence potentially making transpersonal education more readily available to dissatisfied youth and parents needing an alternative to mainstream education.

**Keywords:** indigos, integral consciousness, new generations, psychoenergetics, psychosynthesis

## Resumen

**Introducción:** Este artículo trata sobre la educación transpersonal para la emergencia de una nueva consciencia, encontrada en los llamados “índigo” así como las denominadas juventudes de las nuevas generaciones, quienes muestran características de los “índigo”, como capacidades intuitivas, la consciencia de la sostenibilidad o el locus de control interno entre otras. **Objetivo:** Este estudio trata de investigar las potenciales contribuciones que las últimas tendencias en proyectos educativos con base en la psicosisíntesis, pueden ofrecer tanto a la educación holística como a la convencional. **Metodología:** Tanto los proyectos educativos basados en psicosisíntesis, como los basados en las nuevas generaciones, fueron el foco de dos estudios inter-relacionados, el segundo de los cuales basado en investigación de casos múltiples.

**Resultados:** Los resultados indican que la psicosisíntesis en educación, particularmente a través del emergente campo de la psicoenergética, tiene la capacidad de hallar las necesidades más destacadas, por los rasgos y tendencias encontradas en las nuevas generaciones. El objetivo de la psicoenergética también parece estar en consonancia con las necesidades y tendencias de las futuras investigaciones en educación.

**Conclusión:** Los resultados revelan la necesidad de una educación transpersonal, alternativa a la convencional, destinada a padres e hijos descontentos. Es decir, una llamada a la educación holística a la vez que a la tradicional, así como a los creadores de leyes educativas.

**Palabras clave:** indigos, consciencia integral, nuevas generaciones, psicoenergética, psicosisíntesis

Received: August 1, 2014

Accepted: June 10, 2015

## Introduction

This study attempts to ascertain the potential contributions that psychosynthesis-based educational projects might make to mainstream education, particularly in educating the New Generations. The label 'New Generations' was derived from a previous study that started by investigating the Indigo phenomenon.

The label 'Indigo' is often assigned to individuals (allegedly born in greater numbers since the 1980s, hence the Millennial generation) who appear to be non conformist, rebellious, often confrontational, sustainability conscious, creative, intuitive, highly energized and independent, driven by an inner locus of control; they are often labeled spiritually gifted and/or diagnosed with attention deficit disorders (ADD/ADHD) and they are also said to be Promethean figures, here to challenge the current system in order to introduce an emerging consciousness and a new collective way of being (Carroll & Tober, 1999, 2001, 2009; Masters, 2008). The scantily-researched phenomenon has been criticized for being an expanding 'money-making venture' for self-identified 'New Age' educational experts increasingly offering new courses (Anderson, 2003; Carroll, 2009), and for providing an excuse for parents of hyperactive children to choose to think that their offspring are special, rather than deficient in some way (Witts, 2009). It could be argued, however, that dismissing the Indigo phenomenon altogether without further exploration might represent a missed opportunity to advance understanding of human potential and what might be emerging on a collective level.

After an initial qualitative investigation focusing on Indigos, their characteristics and educational needs, as observed and reported by European educators with experience in this line of work, I elected to explore further afield, in order to ascertain whether and to what extent Indigos were indeed gifted, deficient or could be part of a wider, possibly archetypal phenomenon. My research went on to analyze and compare existing multi-disciplinary research by experts in the following, apparently related areas: the Indigo phenomenon and their characteristics (Masters, 2008), the 'Millennial' generation (Elmore, 2010; Strauss & Howe, 2000), as well as the so-called Spiritually-Gifted (Lovecky, 1998; Piechowski, 2000, 2003, 2009) and ADHD-diagnosed children (Armstrong, 2010; Lovecky, 2004).

Given the commonalities found among all these multi-labeled youth, including ADHD diagnoses and prescriptions that have been increasing to an alarming level (Olfson et al., 2012), it is postulated that the Indigo phenomenon and characteristics would appear to be much more widespread and relevant to a higher number of youth than previously theorized.

This extended number of multi-labeled youth with so-called Indigo characteristics is clustered and henceforth referred to as the New Generations. In essence, the study comparing existing research in the areas stated showed that the characteristics the youth in question appear to have in common seem to be:

- a) strong personalities
- b) a sense of purpose/pre-destination
- c) 'overexcitability' and restlessness
- d) independence
- e) resistance to conformity
- f) very individualized personalities with inner guidance and an inner locus of control
- g) a certain degree of personal sensitivity
- h) strong intuitive abilities
- i) social justice and ecological/sustainability concerns
- j) intolerance towards ambiguities or what they perceive as hypocritical behaviors

It is interesting to note that just over a decade ago, sociologist Paul Ray and psychologist Sherry Ruth Anderson (2001) identified a movement which they called Cultural Creatives; the two researchers claim to have found over 50 million adult Americans and an estimated 80-90 million Europeans (at the time of their research) who appeared to be environmentally sensitive, altruistic, idealistic and spiritual, and who had been creating new social inventions and institutions, worldviews, and lifestyles. According to Ray & Anderson's research, having moved beyond traditionalism, these individuals appear to be characterized by a strong inner locus of control, independence, self-actualizing tendencies and a drive towards initiating social change. Their core values can be summarized as:

- 1) authenticity (consistency between speech and action)
- 2) self-actualization (wholeness of self and cultivation of one's potential), hence the need to find and express one's talents and passions to contribute to the wellbeing of self and others
- 3) appreciation of the emergence of feminine values
- 4) deep-ecology awareness and activism to protect and nurture the planet

Given the striking similarities between characteristics found in the multi-labeled New Generations listed above and those of the Cultural Creatives, it would be tempting to conclude that the former are likely to have been raised by Cultural Creatives parents, except for the observations of psychotherapist Remi Thivierge (2011) among others, according to whom Indigo-like children and youth are found in many 'normal', conformist families who seem to have scant interest in the values stated; furthermore, the rising presence of Indigos in 'typical' families who do not know how to cope with them appears to be challenging, making life more difficult for all concerned.

At the same time, educational consultants have also been reporting a change in youth, having noted new, emerging characteristics. Giftedness expert and consultant Annemarie Roeper, for example, observed 'the arrival of a new kind of child...so bright, so knowledgeable, so naturally spiritual and intuitive' (Roeper, 2007, p.75), while clinical psychologist Linda Silverman (2005) notes that the changes observed in recent generations (especially characterized by whole-brain learning and thinking) are remarkable when compared to characteristics found in the past five decades, even in the gifted; both experts seem convinced that the explanation for such changes is the *evolution of the human species*, which, they claim, often tends to become apparent first in the gifted.

Research seems to indicate that the motivational needs of the 'New Generations' appear to reflect the last two stages of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, namely self-actualization and self-transcendence, which they seem to share with the Cultural Creatives (Trotta, 2012). In other words, an increasing number of adults and youth would appear to be driven by a need to manifest and express creatively their full potential, but not in a self-serving way – rather, with a seemingly expanded consciousness and a *sense of self that is embedded in the totality*, which implies a wish for justice and interest in finding ways to improve the quality of life for all life forms on planet Earth (including the environment).

According to Masters' quantitative research (2008), based in part on Jenny Wade's holonomic theory of the evolution of consciousness (Wade, 1996), self-identified Indigos would appear to have moved beyond a Conformist level of consciousness, increasingly manifesting what Wade calls an Authentic Consciousness, which, she explains, describes the first stage in which 'selfhood is undistorted by ego [and it is] characterized by major changes in psychological integration' (Wade, 1996, p.161). According to Wade's research, some of the characteristics which more clearly seem to identify individuals who manifest an Authentic Consciousness are: whole-brain

thinking with an ability to make connections between seemingly unrelated things, the tendency to think outside of conventional thought, the lack of dependence on social approval and the acceptance of full responsibility for one's own choices (Wade, 1996).

Integralist Ken Wilber (2000) has found Wade's research so valuable that he has integrated it in his book on integral psychology; he interprets Wade's Authentic Consciousness as equivalent to his own theorized Integral Consciousness and Centaur stage, therefore as the next stage of human development, and describes it as a revolutionary and *empowering shift in consciousness* that moves from fragmentation to wholeness, from an external to an internal locus of control. Interestingly, the previous and still mainstream stage of development, Wade's Conformist level, which most schools of psychology describe as enabling a reliable interpretation of 'reality', is seen differently by transpersonal psychology. Italian psychiatrist Roberto Assagioli, creator of the psychosynthetic model of self-awareness and integration of the psyche, and one of the founding fathers of transpersonal psychology, for example, maintained that accurate perceptions of reality can be achieved at higher levels than the mainstream Conformist stage (Assagioli, 1993).

It is also noteworthy that futures research, both in educational and general global trends, shows that spirituality appears to be among young adults' and childrens' unmet needs. British psychology of education expert and futures researcher Guy Claxton, among others, reports that students appear to be increasingly unhappy about an education that seems to fail to equip them with a spiritual dimension, with the ability for lifelong learning and not just for exams; they also appear to be dissatisfied with a world they see as 'unfair, unsustainable, uncaring and corrupt' (Claxton, 2008, p.94). It is particularly significant that Claxton's concern focuses on school curricula which, he observes, are not only shaped according to assumptions about the future and about what constitutes personal fulfillment based on obsolete ways of viewing the world, but also by potentially limited assumptions regarding what the human mind is really capable of (Claxton, 2011). He has emphasized the need to integrate intuitive learning in school curricula (Claxton, 1997) and laments that more attention and research be dedicated to finding what the mind's true potential really is (Lucas & Claxton, 2010). He is not alone. Several other researchers have been devising and supporting forms of education that emphasize intuitive thinking as a way of learning and the development of wisdom (e.g. Adams, 2011; Anthony, 2005, 2008; Gidley & Hampson, 2008; Hart, 2009; Lombardo, 2011).

British futurist and expert in business studies Adrian Done (2012) discusses and analyzes the 12 global trends that seem to be changing the world and suggests how such challenges can be faced with greater confidence and sense of purpose. Done's book argues for a return of a kind of knowledge and education characterized by *wisdom*. It is also emphasized that the tendency to live in denial of current and emerging challenges condemns humanity to repetition of mistakes, a risk Done blames on the current excessively fast lifestyles of constant noise and distractions which drastically reduce time available to dedicate to, and really understand, profound issues at hand. In other words, Done seems to be encouraging the development of transpersonal practices, such as reflection and times for withdrawal and mindfulness, which are deemed to stimulate insight to face problems with more wisdom (Done, 2012).

Lastly, research by educational psychologist and futures researcher Jennifer Gidley and colleague Sohail Inayatullah (2002) has led them to conclude that 'there is a cultural seachange (paradigm shift) occurring, namely popular disenchantment with the dominant materialist worldview that grounds Western culture. Youth are part of this desire to see ethical and spiritual values become central to policy and action in all spheres of life' (Gidley & Inayatullah, 2002, p.243).

In essence, findings from the first doctoral study mentioned above and the implications highlighted in futures research pointed to the need to investigate further the potential validity of a transpersonally-informed educational model applied to mainstream education – could it make a valid contribution to mainstream education, considering that it seems to be congruent with the characteristics of the New Generations found in the first study? This question was what the second study tried to answer by investigating three different psychosynthesis-based educational projects currently being offered in Europe and America.

An interesting observation about psychosynthesis which motivated this study was that, despite having been comparatively recognized and for a few decades even used in primary (Fugitt, 2001; Murdock, 1987; Waters, 2004), higher and gifted education specialist courses (Crampton, 1975; Piechowski, 2009; Whitmore, 1990) and post graduate studies (Hulnick & Hulnick, 2011), the contribution that psychosynthesis might make to education did not appear to be researched in mainstream schools, nor was research on transpersonally-informed education being updated, hence this study's attempts to fill the gap.

To conclude and summarize, the study presented in this article investigates whether and to what extent characteristics and elements of the latest trends

in psychosynthesis-based educational work, as obtained from three experts' descriptions and perceptions (derived from their interviews and previously published material available) might potentially:

- a) contribute to holistic education
- b) inform future developments in mainstream education so that the New Generations might potentially be served better.

## Method

For this exploratory qualitative study, a *multiple case study methodology* (Stake, 1995; Yin 2009) was chosen to enable a comparison of results from different cases and to have data besides interviews, in that consent was also obtained to use all previously published material authored by the three participants (kept anonymous in this article), specifically books, journal articles, videos and previous interviews found on the Internet. This has enabled triangulation of data and offered a multiple perspective on the unit of analysis (i.e. the fundamental issue to be studied that defines the cases under investigation). Data reports and interpretations were also reviewed by participants, to ensure their viewpoints had been adequately represented. Any researcher biases which might influence results obtained were noted and revealed throughout the research process.

The main screening criterion used to select the final three case studies to be analyzed was interviewees' extensive experience as psychosynthesis educators who also had 'insider knowledge', that is experience teaching in mainstream education or working with/training children, young adults, parents and/or mainstream educators. The three highly trained individuals interviewed were two American and one Italian, pioneers in their chosen psychosynthesis-based area of work, which they offered internationally. Interviews were chosen as a data collection method because words people use in telling their stories can be seen as a microcosm of their consciousness, and it is via interviewing that behavior is put in context and an understanding of individuals' actions is facilitated (Seidman, 2006). The semi-structured interview protocol created was loosely followed to make space for interviewees' spontaneous contributions. Each interview lasted approximately one hour.

Thematic content analysis (Anderson, 2007) was used to analyze data; themes found from the interviews and other available material for each case study allowed a 'within-case' analysis for each case study report and facilitated a preliminary theory generation. However, *it was the cross-case analysis*

(cross-case pattern search found when comparing themes from the three case studies) *that allowed me, the researcher, to refine initial impressions, to see evidence through various lenses* (outlined in the results section below) *and to let underlying concepts emerge*, which formed a holistic picture eventually derived from a combination of logical and intuitive processes of incubation of data (Anderson & Braud, 2011).

## Results

The research question for the present study was:

*How are the latest trends in the general psychosynthesis-based educational model contributing to holistic education, according to experienced educators, and how might contributions inform mainstream education?*

In answer to the research question above, an examination of common characteristics identified in all three psychosynthesis-based educational projects under investigation appears to highlight that the latest trends in the transpersonally-informed, psychosynthesis model applied to education focus on:

a) *Learning by experiencing*, in which learning and knowing is encouraged to be derived from direct experience, which enables creative, independent learning that empowers learners to draw their own conclusions, rather than having to accept preexisting ones;

b) *Cultivating multiple ways of knowing* and learning, via intuition, the senses, the body and an interaction of body, emotions and mind to galvanize and open up to deep learning, acquiring potential information available from one's inner and outer worlds and senses;

c) *Finding one's purpose in life* by creative exploration of one's preferred activities, subjects, innate talents, with the support of self-aware parents and educators, who, ideally, act as role models and provide unconditional support without an agenda. This would help sustain a passion for learning because it would entail exploring and learning about oneself;

d) *Transcendent actualization*, namely expansion of consciousness to achieve not only self-awareness, but what Maslow called self-transcendence, a form of Integral/Authentic Consciousness that perceives the self embedded in the totality and leads to ethical behaviors, concern and care for all that lives, for the creation of a sustainable future.

e) *Awareness-based education*, with the contribution of *psychoenergetics* – the perception of energy underlying everything. This model holds that increased awareness of one's ability to get to know oneself and especially the effects of one's thoughts, attitudes and emotions on relationships, consciousness and matter (including the body) is highlighted and taught experientially (mainly through direct perceptions and self-observation). This is done to *encourage a more responsible and ethical use of one's mental and psychic energy in dealing with fellow humans, animals and the natural world*.

f) *Embodiment of transpersonal energies* via multisensory awareness. Through this kind of awareness, information from the Self is received through intuition, emotions and the body in everyday life; cultivating reliance on a dependable inner source of guidance for the development of self-responsibility and an inner locus of control is encouraged.

g) *Education for being*, not just for doing and knowing, which can lead to the development of wisdom in facing life transitions, daily life and decisions regarding the future.

A close examination of the potential contributions that the projects under investigation appear to have in common, listed above, reveals that some of them were not new to holistic education, in that they seem to be an integral part of the holistic education agenda in general (informed by humanistic and transpersonal psychologies, as discussed in the next section).

*Potential contributions to both holistic and mainstream education* might be the following three points:

1) teachings related to *awareness of energy underlying all*, which includes increased awareness of the impact that one's thoughts, attitudes and emotions appear to have on consciousness, matter and relationships (referred to above as awareness-based education, facilitated by *psychoenergetics*)

2) a focus on *transcendent actualization*, which is about expansion of consciousness to include dimensions of life that go beyond the self (self-transcendence also known as transcendent actualization). It also seems to be about educating human beings to engage in the world with a *sustainability* (Integral/Authentic) consciousness, aided by

3) the *embodiment* of transpersonal energies achieved via the engagement of multisensory awareness – of *different ways of knowing*, in other words.

Such contributions also appear to address research needs in educational futures and global trends (discussed in the introduction) as being relevant for

the future of education and of civilization. Also previously mentioned, curricula that emphasize *education for being* and *for wisdom* are being developed by other educators and researchers in more recent educational models which, however, unlike transpersonally-informed psychosynthesis, cannot count on a sound psychological developmental model tried, tested and applied for decades. Ultimately however, one might argue that all three contributions just listed could be grouped into *one*, namely *psychoenergetics*, in terms of awareness-based education.

As detailed in the section below, further findings resulting from the present study revealed to what extent transpersonal psychology, psychosynthesis and hence transpersonal education still appear to be academically marginalized and only partially available to the New Generations due not only to some of their objective shortcomings, but also to long-standing academic prejudices against the discipline per se.

In conclusion, and in answer to the research question, one interpretation of this study's result is that the potential main contribution of the latest trends in psychosynthesis-based educational model - to both holistic and mainstream education - might be represented by psychoenergetics, discussed in the next section. A suggested definition of psychoenergetics is as follows:

'Psychoenergetics is any discipline or technique that helps develop awareness of how the energy behind thoughts, emotions and attitudes affects consciousness, matter (including body) and relationships'. It implies, at least according to interviewed participants, that once awareness of the energetic component of all that exists is cultivated and developed (by *embracing different ways of knowing*), interconnectivity is claimed to be automatically felt, giving rise to self transcendence, hence to a *sustainability consciousness* and sense of service, due to a developed empathic, unitive awareness of all.

## Discussion

Interestingly, psychoenergetics still seems to be a developing discipline. It was introduced decades ago by Assagioli, who envisioned the birth of a Fifth force in psychology called psychoenergetics, which "would emerge once humanity's sensitivity to subtle energies started to show signs of increasing" (Crampton, 2006). Assagioli wrote:

Psychoenergetics derives from advances in modern physics and it has solid scientific basis, following Einstein's conclusions that matter is energy. As a new direction and dimension in

psychology, the Fifth Force focuses on studying all forces existing in the universe and their inter-relationships:

- 1) Physical energies, from the subatomic to the astronomical, galactic level
- 2) Biological energies, which organize all that lives
- 3) Psychic energies of all kinds and from all levels
- 4) Spiritual, transpersonal and transcendent energies

(Assagioli, 1973, p.3, personal translation from Italian).

There appear to be several applications of psychoenergetics. For example, psychotherapist Martha Crampton has pioneered the use of psychoenergetics in conjunction with psychosynthesis for therapeutic purposes (Crampton, 2006).

Used in education, the interviewed experts see the application of psychoenergetics as a way to promote self-awareness, self-actualization and self-transcendence. Outside the realm of psychosynthesis, the discipline of psychoenergetics has been studied and developed by Stanford physicist William Tiller, who has been researching consciousness, subtle energies and the physical effects of mind and intention on matter (Tiller, 1997, 2007).

Interestingly, psychotherapist and psychosynthesis trainer Douglas Russell (1981) maintains that psychosynthesis has always conceived of the human being as an energy system and seems to be naturally closely aligned with the Third, Fourth and Fifth forces in psychology (humanistic, transpersonal, psychoenergetics, respectively). What the present study has highlighted is psychosynthesis, expressed through the Fifth force in psychology, with a *focus on attitudes and different ways of knowing*, which promotes awareness of subtle energies and of the effect of one's beliefs, thoughts and emotions/attitudes on relationships and matter.

The present study also revealed that the underlying and perhaps less obvious purpose behind psychoenergetics is to *encourage people to explore their unexplored potential*. Power, as history teaches, has been a central concern for humanity for millennia. As discussed in the introduction, in the emerging Integral/Authentic consciousness (envisaged by Wade and Wilber, among others), power still seems to be a central concern, but with an important difference – this time, it seems that *power needs to be developed from within (power over oneself)*, instead of being in the hands of few who rule many (power over others), so that each individual can govern themselves, develop an inner locus of control, and be self-responsible.

While this process seems to be experiential, emphasizing learning by direct experiencing, psychoenergetics itself also seems to be about learning to *merge the conscious and unconscious minds (i.e. different ways of knowing)*.

In essence, psychoenergetics seems to be based on Hermetic principles, especially two of them, namely:

1) *As above, so below* (i.e. being able to observe to what extent the macrocosm is reflected in the microcosm of one's life and consciousness).

2) *As within, so without* (i.e. being able to observe to what extent one's life can change according to one's inner attitudes and ability to transform them).

Religious studies expert Kocku Von Stuckrad (2005) points out that the image of the human being who can choose to emancipate him/herself through seeking the Divine in him/herself without a mediator is what characterizes both modern esotericism and transpersonal psychology's anthropological assumptions. Jung perhaps contributed by sacralizing 'the psyche and simultaneously psychologising the sacred', mirroring Neoplatonic teachings (Von Stuckrad, 2005, p.137). In a similar way, Assagioli's psychosynthesis (1993) clearly reflects and contains esoteric, theosophical teachings, promoting the Self as the connection between the Soul and one's personality.

Psychoenergetics, interestingly, appears to incorporate both transpersonal and esoteric elements, in that, besides being based on transpersonal psychology teachings, it seems to contain Hermetic (and Neoplatonic) principles. It also appears to be relevant to the consciousness and emerging paradigm that the New Generations are manifesting, as discussed in the Introduction section. Interestingly, spiritual forms of education have now become part of holistic education models, or so claims John Miller (2007), Professor in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). An inclusion of spirituality in the curriculum, Miller argues, entails creating a stronger connection with the cosmos and stimulating a seemingly lost sense of wonder and awe in students (Miller, 2007).

Tobin Hart (2009), Professor of Psychology specializing in transpersonal psychology and education, likewise advocates a form of education that is as much about inner knowing and personal transformation as it is about information acquisition; he actively *promotes educating for a developing Integral consciousness*, especially via the integration of wisdom in education. It would appear that there is much overlap between current holistic and transpersonal forms of

education and that *both appear to address needs reflected by the characteristics found in the New Generations*, as well as trends highlighted as desirable by futures research, as discussed in the Introduction.

However, criticism of holistic education addresses the difficulty of implementing in mainstream schools holistic values, which, some argue, appear hardly relevant in today's competitive world. Critics also call into question the academic rigor of holistic institutions, in that ethical values, personal or spiritual development cannot be measured or tested, with the consequent risk of holistic education being marginalized for lack of credibility and for potentially creating collaborators, rather than future leaders. It is also argued that students graduating from holistic institutions may find it hard to adjust to mainstream university education or to find employment (Crawford & Grossiter, 1993).

Psychology and its various forces, from behavioral to transpersonal, have always, directly or indirectly, influenced mainstream education (Roberts, 1975). Yet, despite the fact that transpersonal psychology has been developed for decades, transpersonally-informed educational projects (from elementary to graduate courses) have not found a specific place in mainstream education so far. Hence, the relevant question is: what is truly preventing transpersonal educational models from reaching mainstream acceptance?

Professor of Psychology and researcher Paul Cunningham (2007), among others, laments that, after 40 years of its inception, there seems to be a tendency to marginalize transpersonal psychology. He argues that because many transpersonal concepts tend to run counter to what is considered 'official' or perhaps 'acceptable' in mainstream orthodox Western psychology, it tends to attract fierce mainstream opposition for being 'unscientific' and too metaphysical, for neglecting evil and the shadow side. On the other hand, Cunningham also criticizes transpersonal psychology's fragmentation of paradigm, lack of a comprehensive textbook, which represents all areas of research within the field, lack of cohesion and agreement among practitioners in many areas, including research methods, 'acceptable' research areas and the education of its students (Cunningham, 2007). Having said that, however, Cunningham observes that conventional psychology appears to manifest a prejudiced perception of humanity's psycho-spiritual nature and potential and that there still might be a (mainstream) bias against addressing or taking seriously the full potential and spiritual nature of human beings (op. cit.).

The problem is that, limitations of transpersonal psychology notwithstanding, the currently held worldview inevitably influences educational choices

by policy makers and so does psychological research, which, itself, seems to be influenced by the potential limitations/biases of the prevalent paradigm – a vicious cycle that is potentially dangerous and harmful, especially to the New Generations.

Another confirmation of mainstream academic bias against spirituality is highlighted by scientist and social critic Mark Koltko-Rivera (2006), who, having researched self-transcendence, highlights the fact that institutional psychology seems largely unwilling to recognize the existence and need for inclusion of transpersonal, spiritual dimensions in mainstream psychological research. Koltko-Rivera has found that the more complete version of Maslow's popular hierarchy of needs theory, which includes self-transcendence as a motivational step beyond self-actualization, has been almost completely left out of psychology texts for over three decades. With very few notable exceptions, emphasizes Koltko-Rivera, such texts have been presenting an inaccurate, incomplete version of the theory, leaving out the transcendent aspects. Yet, wider recognition of self-transcendence as part of Maslow's hierarchy of motivational needs, Koltko-Rivera argues, could have important consequences for theory and research, potentially providing:

- (a) a more comprehensive understanding of worldviews regarding the meaning of life;
- (b) broader understanding of the motivational roots of altruism, social progress, and wisdom;
- (c) a deeper understanding of religious violence;
- (d) integration of the psychology of religion and spirituality into the mainstream of psychology and
- (e) a more multiculturally integrated approach to psychological theory (Koltko-Rivera, 2006, p.302).

It seems clear that ignoring the transcendent aspect of the human psyche also *limits information-made available to policy makers*, which, in turn, limits their policies and decisions, as well as parents' and youth's choices. Existing research in the field about what motivates individuals, what motivates learning, how the mind works, human potential, etc., does or *should inform educational practices*, as Lucas & Claxton (2010), cited above, also argue.

Recent research by educator and transpersonal researcher Scott Buckler (2012) focused on analyzing hermeneutically all information found on transperson-

al education and revealed that scant recent resources can be found in this area; in fact, the main writings appear to date back to the early 1970s and 1980s, which confirms that there seems to be a gap or omission in investigating transpersonally-informed educational models. Psychosynthesis research in education (or lack thereof) appears to align very closely with Buckler's findings, most of which were again inspired by humanistic psychologists and early transpersonal researchers and educators. The present investigation, in conclusion, appears to confirm previous trends in transpersonal education, which focuses on transformation, evolving consciousness that leads to agency, self-reliance and self-actualization, and the cultivation of human potential.

Psychosynthesis, particularly through the developing discipline of psychoenergetics, as revealed by the present multiple case study investigation, would seem to have contributions to make which:

- a) are fully aligned with the early and the more current visions pertaining to transpersonal, transformative education and
- b) make a new contribution to education for the New Generations' needs, especially via the developing discipline of psychoenergetics.

Furthermore, as mentioned, the contributions to mainstream education from the investigated psychosynthesis-based educational projects *appear to be in line with the needs and trends highlighted as desirable by educational futures research* as well, discussed in the Introduction section above.

## Conclusions

The three psychosynthesis-based educational projects under investigation appear to be in line with past and current holistic and transpersonal education. Interestingly, they also seem to be aligned with the first study's findings, in that the psychosynthetic model potentially seems to meet Indigos' educational needs, which the interviewed educators in the first study had identified. More to the point, new trends revealed by investigating the three transpersonal educational projects in the present study seem to be relevant to a changing world, in that they seem to address the need to develop wisdom, creative thinking, self-actualizing/transcending tendencies and sustainability consciousness in future leaders, which recent research in education and other fields seems to indicate as desirable in the future.

Unlike other holistic models, the educational projects investigated are based, and can count on psy-

chosynthesis and transpersonal education, which have been established and active in research and practice for four decades. As discussed, psychosynthesis has been internationally applied in education and, due to successes reported, it has even earned grants and public funds (Whitmore, 2008). Yet, it has not 'crossed the divide' to mainstream education due to both the shortcomings of transpersonal psychology and psychosynthesis research and application gaps and to academic biases against them, which might impede or delay their full integration in mainstream channels.

The ongoing, general mainstream tendency to ignore individuals' spiritual dimension and to leave out research on human potential (revealing what the mind is capable of) based on cultural anthropology, positive psychology, transpersonal psychology and consciousness and even parapsychology research implies that:

- a) policy makers have less complete information than is, in fact, available,
- b) holistic forms of education are confined to private, expensive schools and
- c) parents', educators' and students' choices are consequently seriously limited.

Mainstream attempts to preserve the status quo by not evolving education policies and schools curricula seem to force a type of conformity that might feed a dangerous tendency to misdiagnose or drug the young, which inevitably contributes to alienating parents and the New Generations from mainstream education. At the same time, elitist attitudes often found in psychosynthesis circles (Robertson, 1998) also need to be addressed, as does the fragmentation found in the discipline of transpersonal psychology (Cunningham, 2007).

I hope that my own exploratory investigation, despite not offering any definitive answers, might symbolize a first step in both raising awareness of the various phenomena here investigated and in heeding Indigos' call for adults to *listen* and to provide guidance to them (Carroll & Tober, 2009), ideally through a form of 'Education for Integral/Authentic Consciousness'. An educational model for the development of this theorized emerging consciousness would necessarily explore more fully our unexplored human potential, the desire for which many representatives of the New Generations already seem to manifest. Whether adolescents would still rebel and reject this futuristic form of education or welcome it, remains at this stage unknown.

## Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the Graduate School of Education, College of Social Sciences and International Futures, University of Exeter, UK, for funding this study as part of a Studentship Grant for a PhD in Education. Research Group: CREATE in Educational Futures Centre, led by Professor Anna Craft, this study's main supervisor.

## References

- Adams, A. (2011). Integral intelligence: A 21st century necessity. *Integral Review*, 7 (1), 75–85.
- Anderson, L. (2003). *Indigo: The colour of money*. Retrieved 12/05/2010, from: <http://www.selectsmart.com/twyman.html>
- Anderson, R. (2007). *Thematic content analysis (TCA): Descriptive presentation of qualitative data*. Retrieved 17/02/2010, from: [www.wellknowingconsulting.org](http://www.wellknowingconsulting.org).
- Anderson, R. & Braud, W. (2011). *Transforming self and others through research: Transpersonal research methods and skills for the human sciences and humanity*. NY: SUNY.
- Anthony, M. T. (2005). Education for transformation: Integrated intelligence in the knowledge society and beyond. *Journal of Futures Studies*, 9 (3), 31–46.
- Anthony, M. T. (2008). The case for integrated intelligence. *World Futures: The Journal of General Evolution*, 64 (4), 233–253.
- Armstrong, T. (2010). *Neurodiversity: Discovering the extraordinary gifts of Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia, and other brain differences*. MA: Da Capo Press.
- Assagioli, R. (1973). *Le nuove dimensioni della psicologia*. Istituto di Psicosintesi di Firenze: lezione 1a.
- Assagioli, R. (1993). *Psychosynthesis: A collection of basic writings*. NY: Penguin.
- Buckler, S. (2012). An Hermeneutic analysis of transpersonal education: Policies, principles and practices. *Literacy Information and Computer Education Journal*, 3 (1), pp.560–567.

- Carroll, L. & Tober, J. (1999). *The indigo children: The new children have arrived*. London: Hay House.
- Carroll, L. & Tober, J. (2001). *An indigo celebration: More messages, stories and insights from the indigo children*. London: Hay House.
- Carroll, L. & Tober, J. (2009). *The indigo children 10 years later: What's happening with the indigo teenagers!* London: Hay House.
- Claxton, G. (1997). *Hare brain, tortoise mind: Why intelligence increases when you think less*. London: Fourth Estate.
- Claxton, G. (2008). *What's the point of school? Re-discovering the heart of education*. Oxford: One World Publications.
- Claxton, G. (2011). *The learning powered school: Pioneering 21st century education*. Bristol, UK: TL0 Ltd.
- Crampton, M. (1975). Some applications of psychosynthesis in the educational field. In T.B. Roberts (Ed.), *Four psychologies applied to education* (pp.453–462). Cambridge: Schenkman.
- Crampton, M. (2006). Psychoenergetics: Towards an integration of subtle energy work with the psychosynthesis perspective. In Psychosynthesis and the body- *AAP monograph*, Vol. 6, pp.16–44. CA: The Association for the Advancement of Psychosynthesis.
- Crawford, M. & Grossiter, G. (1993). The future of holistic education: The recession we had to have? *Curriculum Perspectives*, 13 (1), 37–46.
- Cunningham, P. (2007). The challenge, prospects and promise of transpersonal psychology. *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, 26, 41–55.
- Done, A. (2012). *Global trends: Facing up to a changing world*. NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Elmore, T. (2010). *Generation Y: Our last chance to save their future*. GA: Poet Gardener Publishing.
- Fugitt, E.D. (2001). *“He hit me back first!” Development of the will in children for making choices; Activities for teaching and parenting*. Rolling Hills Estates: Jalmar Press.
- Gidley, J. & Hampson, G. (2008). Integral approaches to school educational futures. In J. Bussey, S. Inayatullah, & I. Milojevic (Eds.), *Alternative educational futures: Pedagogies for an emergent world* (pp. 285–304). Rotterdam: Sense Publications.
- Gidley, J. & Inayatullah, S. (Eds.) (2002). *Youth futures: Comparative research and transformative visions*. CT: Praeger Publishers.
- Hart, T. (2009). *From information to transformation: Education for the evolution of consciousness*. NY: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Hulnick, H.R. & Hulnick, M.R. (2011). *Loyalty to your soul: The heart of spiritual psychology*. NY: Hay House.
- Koltko-Rivera, M.E. (2006). Rediscovering the later version of Maslow's hierarchy of needs: Self-transcendence and opportunities for theory, research, and unification. *Review of General Psychology*, 10 (4), 302–317.
- Lombardo, T. (2011). *Wisdom, consciousness and the future*. E-book: Xlibriscorporation.
- Lovecky, D. V. (1998). Spiritual sensitivity in gifted children. *Roeper Review*, 20 (3), 178–183.
- Lovecky, D. V. (2004). *Different minds: Gifted children with AD/HD, Asperger syndrome, and other learning deficits*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Lucas, B. & Claxton, G. (2010). *New kinds of smart*. Berkshire: OUP, Mc Graw-Hill Education.
- Masters, D. D. (2008). *Comparison of self-actualization and psychic ability between self-identified Indigos and matched controls as measured by the personal orientation inventory, the Rhine cards and demographic data*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Faculty of Holos University Graduate Seminary (Missouri, USA). Retrieved: 13/02/2013, from: [http://www.holosuniversity.net/pdf/MastersD\\_Dissertation.pdf](http://www.holosuniversity.net/pdf/MastersD_Dissertation.pdf)

- Miller, J.P. (2007). *The holistic curriculum*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Murdock, M. (1987). *Spinning inward: Using guided imagery with children for learning, creativity and relaxation*. Boston: Shambhala.
- Olfson, M., Blanco, C., Liu, S., Wang, S. & Correll, C.U. (2012). National trends in the office-based treatment of children, adolescents, and adults with antipsychotics. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 69 (12), 1247–1256.
- Piechowski, M. M. (2000). Childhood experiences and spiritual giftedness. *Advanced Development Journal*, 9, 65–90.
- Piechowski, M.M. (2003). Emotional and spiritual giftedness. In N. Colangelo & G.A. Davis (Eds.), *Handbook of gifted education* (3rd ed.) (pp.403-416). MA: Pearson Education.
- Piechowski, M. M. (2009). The inner world of the young and bright. In D. Ambrose & T. Cross (Eds.), *Morality, ethics and gifted minds* (pp.177–194). NY: Springer.
- Ray, P.H. & Anderson, S.R. (2001). *The cultural creatives: How 50 million people are changing the world*. NY: Crown Publications/Random House.
- Roberts, T. B. (Ed.) (1975). *Four psychologies applied to education: Freudian, behavioral, humanistic, transpersonal*. NY: Halsted/John Wiley & Sons.
- Robertson, C. (1998). Psychosynthesis and its shadow. *Psychosynthesis Community News*, 3 (1). Retrieved: 28/09/2012 from: <http://aappspsychosynthesis.org/psychosynthesis-and-its-shadow/>
- Roeper, A. (2007). *The 'I' of the beholder: A guided journey to the essence of a child*. AZ: Great Potential Press.
- Russell, D. (1981). Psychosynthesis in Western psychology. *Psychosynthesis Digest* 1 (1) Fall/Winter. Retrieved: 01/10/2010, from: <http://www.psykosyntese.dk/a-151/>
- Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. NY: Teachers College Press.
- Silverman, L. in Atwater, P.M.H. (2005). *Beyond the Indigo children: The new children and the coming of the Fifth world*. VT: Bear & Co.
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. CA: SAGE.
- Strauss, W. & Howe, N. (2000). *Millennials rising: The next great generation*. NY: Random House/Vintage books.
- Thivierge, R. (2011). *Profound healing for Indigo children and youth... and other sensitive souls*. Vancouver, Canada: Phoenix Vision Publications.
- Tiller, W. A. (1997). *Science and human transformation: Subtle energies, intentionality and consciousness*. CA: Pavior Publishing.
- Tiller, W. A. (2007). *Psychoenergetic science: A second Copernican-scale revolution*. CA: Pavior Publishing.
- Trotta, P. (2012). The Indigo phenomenon and the New Generations: Are they symbolic of an emerging consciousness and paradigm? *The International Journal of Arts and Sciences*, 5 (3), 127–154.
- Trotta, P. (2013). *The potential contribution of psychosynthesis to education: an interview-based exploration of educators' experiences of working with members of the 'New Generations' who are developing towards self-actualization and self-transcendence*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Exeter University, UK. Retrieved on 2/10/2013 from Open Research Exeter (ORE): <http://hdl.handle.net/10871/11561>
- Von Stuckrad, K. (2005). *Western esotericism: A brief history of secret knowledge*. NY: Equinox Publishing.
- Wade, J. (1996). *Changes of mind: A holonomic theory of the evolution of consciousness*. NY: SUNY.
- Waters, T. (2004). *Therapeutic story writing: A practical guide to developing emotional literacy in primary schools*. London: David Fulton Publisher.

- Whitmore, D. (1990). *The joy of learning: Guide to psychosynthesis in education*. London: Harper Collins.
- Whitmore, D. (2008). Teens and Toddlers. *Politics Home*. Retrieved 13/06/2012, from <http://www.epolitix.com/latestnews/article-detail/newsarticle/diana-whitmore-teensand-toddlers/>
- Wilber, K. (2000). *Integral psychology: Consciousness, spirit, psychology, therapy*. MA: Shambhala.
- Witts, B. (2009). *Seeing the indigo child. The committee for skeptical inquiry*. Retrieved 15/05/2010 from: [http://www.csicop.org/si/show/seeing\\_the\\_indigo\\_children/](http://www.csicop.org/si/show/seeing_the_indigo_children/)
- Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods (applied social research methods)*. CA: SAGE.

**\*Patrizia Trotta, PhD** is a researcher and educator specializing in the development of human potential and education for a new Consciousness. Research for her PhD in Education was sponsored, supervised and carried out at the University of Exeter, UK. She teaches transpersonal forms of education, particularly Hermetic Psychoenergetics, which promotes self-actualization, self-transcendence, and the development of intuitive self-directedness, together with an awareness of the effects that one's thoughts, attitudes and emotions can have on self, others and all living things. She is currently writing a book while hoping to collaborate with an educational institution that would welcome a more widespread application of Hermetic Psychoenergetics, especially for the benefit of the New Generations.

Email: [patriziatrotta45@gmail.com](mailto:patriziatrotta45@gmail.com)

Web: <http://new-consciousness-solutions.weebly.com/>