



Yoga Intelligence as a Concept of Mental Ability

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Abstract

The main factors comprising the background of the yoga intelligence concept development are presented in this paper. Yoga intelligence as a concept owes its existence to careful observations revealing that, in time, yoga practitioners develop unique abilities. This paper investigates yoga intelligence and hopes to assist in uncovering the benefits of its possible application.

Keywords: Yoga; Yoga intelligence; Concept of mental ability

Introduction

Understanding represents the element of the adaptive system which evolution has provided us with in order to make the mind capable of functioning in the environment Donald, Mithen [1,2]. Darwin's theory of evolution and empiricism ideas (Lock and Hume), have set the bases for the insight into origins and nature of human intelligence. The idea that human intelligence is the most advanced stage in the evolution of species inspired the creation of the first empirically based comprehensive theory of intelligence Spearman [3]. The theory of primary mental abilities is an empirical model which emphasizes the importance of various abilities or cognitive modules Thurstone [4]. The seven primary mental abilities in Thurstone's model are: verbal comprehension, word fluency, number facility, perceptual speed, reasoning, special visualization and associative memory. This theory has inspired other theories accenting the modular nature of intelligence (specific intelligence), including the theory of multiple intelligences Gardner [5].

Opinions differ on defining the concept and questions concerning intelligence – whether it is a unique ability or is comprised of a certain number of varying separate abilities. The study so far has only given partial answers concerning this question. Research on this subject has been popular during the first half of the previous century and among the authors of that time Charles Spearman stands out supporting the idea of a unique general intelligence, while Thurstone concludes that intelligence is constructed by combining is even primary factors and one general factor (g factor). Guilford, on the other hand, argues that intelligence is made out of a great number of factors. Researching the structure of intelligence was done using factor analysis and all results so far show that success in problem

solving does not depend on one ability only, but rather on a combination of multiple abilities.

According to the theory of fluid and crystallized intelligence Cattell [6], intelligence encompasses two main dimensions. Fluid intelligence refers to the abilities necessary to process general information and reasoning which enable a person to present and process information, such as abstract relations and conclusion making. The speed and control of processing, working memory and Spearman's principles of cognition are components of fluid intelligence. The nature of general ability has been in the center of much research, as was its connection to special or modular abilities and the fundamental psycho-physiological and neurological parameters of mental processes. Contemporary factor analysis provides strong mathematical background to the model Carroll, Jensen [7,8]. According to Jensen (1998), the g factor is not essentially a psychological or behavioral variable, but a biological one" (p. 578). It is wrong to think of the g factor as a cognitive process, an operational principle of the mind or a creation of neural activity. Over the course of the twentieth century Spearman's model has pointed to the importance of the Cattell-Horn and Thurstone model, because it gives significance to various specific abilities. Cognitive mechanics is related to fluid intelligence, as is cognitive pragmatics to crystallized intelligence. The conclusion is that development is the result of a dynamic interaction between the two processes, i.e., models; therefore we have: selection, optimization and compensation. This concept is very similar to the concept of successful intelligence provided by Sternberg.

Some of the main postulates of Vygotsky's theory (1978) are integrated into many contemporary developmental theories, such

as Fischer’s theory of cognitive development Fischer and Bidell [9]. In the last few decades there is an increasing interest among educators for the theory of multiple intelligences Gardner [5]. Successful intelligence is the ability to adapt to, shape or select real world environments in such a way that a person can fulfill his goals and the goals of both the society and the culture he lives in Sternberg [10]. A person that possesses successful intelligence balances adaptation, shaping environment and choice, giving them equal importance. Nevertheless, other theorists argue that intellectual development is a product of social relations. Higher mental functions, such as planning, originate from social life and are formed by historical circumstances Das et al. [11]. Many contemporary theories of intelligence, opposed to earlier ones, can be seen as systems theories because of their complexity concerning many questions. Sternberg points out that this is the case because contemporary theories try to look at intelligence as a complex system.

Defining Yoga Intelligence

The literal meaning of yoga is unity. Therefore, yoga acknowledges fragmentation, lack of unity, relying on its methods to unite the fragments into a whole. The absence of contradictory tendencies is achieved by focusing (Ekagrata citta). This specific form of calmness halts consciousness fragmentation, introducing a new kind of perception that is comprehensive and spontaneous Nikic [12]. An unbiased research into yoga as a self-development discipline, including yoga methods and their effects, has made possible the realization that, in time, yoga practitioners develop a unique combination of abilities.

During a specific course of time practitioners’ perception changes on many levels: energetic – awareness, understanding and managing energy flow; physiological – increase in vital capacity; emotional – detecting, understanding and expressing feelings, compassion; mental clarity; creational out flows in the form of idea realization while under creative inspiration; strengthening of a feeling of security which relies on an inner support system; and ability to glimpse into the purpose and meaning. These developmental changes result from the process of uncovering the authentic “I” or the “core”. To be more precise, our perception (field of detection) widens; this is a response coming from the core after practicing yoga Nikic [12].

Yoga intelligence can be defined as the ability to use resources as a whole, the ability to realize, understand and manage our deepest meanings and purposes by searching to the meaning, the ability to recognize all of the life’s unpredictable events as the signs for development and maturation, relying mostly on the depth of experience, i.e. insight, with the aim of achieving unity - the state of Samadhi and Moksha. On the path of self-development yoga practitioners strengthen the awareness of their own potentials, therefore their abilities to understand, express and manage them also increase. At the same time, yoga intelligence can be perceived as a complex adaptive construct which encourages a constant transformation inside the system.

Mental processes are a part of this complex adaptive construct and are activated with every environmental encounter, defining its meaning Nikic [12].

Yoga Intelligence as a Model of Mental Ability

Mental abilities are seen here as personal traits which have an influence on the differences in the success of certain activities, providing that similar experience and equal motivation to successfully complete these activities exist. There are two viewpoints. One indicates that ability depends on the number of different activities; therefore we can talk about our ability as a yoga instructor, manager, professor, mechanic, etc. The other viewpoint is based on the realization that the abilities which we manifest doing different kinds of activities can be reduced to a limited number of abilities. This viewpoint has been backed-up by the results of the factorial analysis of human ability.

The Concept of Yoga Intelligence

Yoga intelligence is a new concept awaiting more research on human qualities it can be associated with. Nevertheless, having in mind that yoga intelligence functions as a conscious, complex and adaptive mental system, the qualities of this system appear to be the best starting point to look for the identifying qualities of yoga intelligence (Table 1). The Yoga intelligence concept is comprised of two components: consciousness–which contains self-consciousness, as well as environmental consciousness; and the ability of managing internal processes and relations.

Table 1: Yoga Intelligence Construct.

Yoga Intelligence	
Consciousness	Management
1.	2.
1. Energetic processes	
2. Physiological processes	
3. Mental clarity	
4. Emotional processes	
5. Motivational processes	
6. Meaning and purpose	
7. Social relations (understanding and tolerance)	
8.attention focus	
9. Creative processes	

A yoga practitioner acquires the unique ability of recognizing, understanding and managing the energetic, physiological, emotional, contemplative, creative, communicational and motivational processes. The ability of self-management and relationship management is accomplished with the use of a wide specter of yoga techniques. Out of all the elements, self-motivation should be strengthened as the key characteristic accompanying the practice of yoga; it emerges from the need to search for meaning and purpose, on the path of reaching liberation – moksha. Self-motivation represents the capability toper severe, even when one is faced with the complexity of

yoga practice demands or the difficulties accompanying the developmental stages in yoga practice.

Indicators of Behavioral Change

By accepting yoga as a system (of life philosophy and practice) an individual experiences changes in motivation and life dynamics. Nevertheless, it is very hard to detect and measure those changes, unless they are expressed through behavioral or ideological changes. To be more exact, when we cannot detect the motives of a person, we can describe and categorize his/her behavior Nikic [12].

Measuring Yoga Intelligence

The difficulties in measuring yoga intelligence can be found in the disharmony between the need to ensure good metric characteristics of the tests and the need to satisfy the context of the concept at the same time. Namely, if traditional intelligence tests, which consist mainly of precisely defined and metrically sane abstract tasks, are applied, a problem of context emerges, i.e., the fact that such tasks are rare in real life circumstances. The situation is further complicated by the fact that yoga intelligence enables different paths that lead to solution, which complicates the task of creating measuring instruments. A questionnaire for assessing yoga intelligence has been developed, demanding from the respondents to perform ranking of the provided options of behavior in various conditions. The measuring is performed with the help of spontaneous assessment of abilities, using the self-assessment scales. A multifactorial scale of yoga intelligence has been constructed; it contains subscales divided into classes. A measuring instrument containing two subscales should be considered metrically satisfying, especially when the subscale reliability is in question, because of the high values detected Nikic [12]. The concept of yoga intelligence can be interesting to scientific and wider social circles, because it can help in solving the disharmony between what an individual thinks and what he feels, what he wants and what he needs, what he does and the need for a sense of purpose, as well as in solving Fromm's dilemma - to have or to be.

Relevant Research

In 2013 research has been conducted on a sample from three groups of students: students from India (Patanjali Institute, in Haridwar) and Serbia (students from the International Yoga Academy and students from the Faculty of Sport and Physical Education, in Belgrade). The fourth – control group was comprised of non-practitioners. The research showed that, although a significant culturological factor was present, the results obtained from yoga practitioners in India and those in Serbia show similarities in value indicator on the scale of yoga intelligence. Yoga practitioners showed higher level of yoga intelligence than respondents of sport and control group.

In 2014a research was conducted on a sample of three groups of students: from India (SVYASA University, in Bangalore) and Serbia (students from the International Yoga Academy and

students from the Faculty of Sport and Physical Education, in Belgrade). Once again, the high values scored by yoga practitioners on the indicator scales of yoga intelligence were confirmed, while high values were absent in non-practitioners (including sport students).

One more research has also been conducted to investigate the connections between yoga intelligence and workplace competency in business management. On a sample of thirty managers from Serbia an education seminar in yoga practice had been carried out in the duration of three months (twice a week – asana, full yoga breath, kapalabhati, bhastrika, ekagrata, relaxation techniques); the control group was comprised of managers who didn't practice yoga. The results showed that yoga practitioners presented higher level of self-motivation, corporal consciousness, emotions and mental processes than control group respondents Nikic [13].

In 2014 an analysis has been conducted on the subject of alleviating the consequences of the burnout syndrome by practicing yoga, including the concept of yoga intelligence as an instrument for measuring the management of employee potential Nikic and Janjusevic [14]. Yoga was observed as a form of intelligence, having in mind that it integrates the activities with which a balance is achieved between the physiological, emotional, cognitive and motivational processes. A significant statistical difference was noted on most indicators of yoga intelligence concerning the participants that have gone through the yoga stress management program.

Discussion

Yoga is perceived as a form of intelligence, considering it integrates abilities which establish balance between physiological, emotional, cognitive and motivational processes. The concept of yoga is based on the existence of latent processes and the ability of their recognition, understanding and application, with the goal to achieve uniting - the state of samadhi and personal release (moksha).

The concept of yoga intelligence can enable meaningful human potential management Nikic [12]. The concept of yoga intelligence is widely used, since it can detect changes that occur within practitioners and make them measurable. The concept of yoga intelligence has its application in the inclusion of people with disabilities Nikic and Zulic [15]. Yoga intelligence has also found application in measuring the effects of implementing yoga programs in the workplace, for the purpose of increasing manager competency Nikic [13]. Research has been made in order to determine to which extent yoga can be used as an instrument for managing organizational behavior. It was concluded that the application of yoga intelligence can be useful in achieving humane conscious management Nikic [16,17], as well as in alleviating burnout effects in employees [14]. The concept of yoga intelligence provides valid measurement of changes which occur during yoga therapy - energotherapy process Nikic [18]. Today, yoga is also recognized as a sport branch. At the same

time, yoga is incorporated into training processes in other sports. Yoga intelligence is applied when assessing the training process; psychological changes before, during and after a training cycle are measured.

The wide area covering yoga intelligence complicates the constitution of a unified definition and its affirmation. Yoga intelligence possesses the conceptual, correlational and developmental characteristics; therefore it can be treated as ability. The conceptual prerequisite is satisfied because yoga intelligence is the reflection of the mental performance, not a primary behavior or some form of unintelligent accomplishment. Therefore, cognitive processes are a measure of the specter of abilities connected to emotions and behavior. The correlational prerequisite demands the existence of a moderate connection between the abilities within the indicator of yoga intelligence, as well as coherence of yoga intelligence with other kinds of intelligence. Developmental characteristics are reflected in the necessity of yoga intelligence changing depending on the dimensions of time, age and experience.

Conclusion

Undertaken research indicates that yoga intelligence can be operationalized to function as a set of abilities, having in mind the individual differences in the stage of yoga intelligence; this satisfies the conceptual prerequisite. Yoga intelligence abilities inter correlate, therefore the correlation prerequisite is fulfilled. The yoga intelligence theoretical concept can be seen in its commensurability as a direct measure of ability and not just as a descriptive tool. The fact that it can also be used to predict the success of a criterion of greater significance is also of considerable importance.

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