

Daniel Goleman, Peter Senge

## The Triple Focus: A New Approach to Education

More Than Sound, LLC, Florence, MA, 2014.  
84 pp; 3 illustrations, 2 photos

“We children are often hearing ‘You are the future.’ We don’t agree with that. We don’t have that much time. We need to make changes now. We kids are ready, are you?”, a twelve year old of 75 pounds of fierce determination calmly said.

People have inherited, through the industrial age, the school design whose primary function was to train factory workers *en masse*: expert teachers supposed to deliver information frontally. The factory model developed almost two hundred years ago in the world of rapidly changing technology, unfolding nowadays it seems to inhibit children’s ability in building their inner capacities. Two authors of ‘The Triple Focus’ elaborate why implementation of science-based beneficial self-mastery methods tends to fail in some schools. The Triple Focus is a neuroscientifically supported social-emotional learning method. It is based on lessons in emotional literacy, i.e. ‘inner focus’, extending to cognitive and emotional comprehension of others mental models, called the ‘other focus’, and followed by systems identification to understand the consequences of our own actions at a global scale beyond the anthropocene reality, ‘outer focus’.

If we would to clarify ‘The Triple Focus’ as an ‘outer focus’, the feedback-loop of this system would go as following: by naming emotions and monitoring our inner focus prefrontal cortex is witnessing functions of the lower brain circuitry of the limbic system. Naming emotions seems mandatory on a radical example of anorexia, where eating is proven to be associated with sadness. The limbic system, which is a heritage from our ancestors, is a fight-or-flight alert system activated when there is a threat in the environment. What is challenging the cognitive and emotional development of the human body instrument in the modern world is the surrounding dynamic social complexity. By monitoring impulses from the lower brain, before acting on them, agitation is substituted by cognitive control. Developing attention cultivates

resistance to distractions. Resistance to distractors is a crucial skill of excellence achieved by self-mastery, and business nurtures excellence in smart-risk taking. Otherwise moderated in collision with fear from rules, sanctions and warnings, achieved self-mastery of an individual becomes an ethical platform for innovative creation. Once accomplished, emotional literacy serves as a rudder in understanding the level of literacy of the other. Existent is the absence of impulsive reactions, and further, beyond the anthropocene focus, the 'outer focus' represents our collective capacity because building community is one of the reasons human species have survived. As two authors do elaborate, these 3 skills appear to operate along each other naturally.

Why is it, then, that this evidence-based tool tends to fail its implementation?

'When it's invisible, it's untestable'. Inner focus (e.g., naming emotions, monitoring focus) not accomplished in educators does not nurture confidence in school developing cognitive and emotional abilities in children. Most educators are not necessarily skilful, but as long as the focus is under the surface, it's untestable. It appears that having a sophisticated strategy does not make us sufficient for the battlefield. Effective change-leaders start by being an example of achieved self-mastery.

Once internalized 'inner focus' facilitates the other two of The Triple Focus. 'The Triple Focus' does leave an impact of a call for change which starts within an individual having an honest conversation about their own mental models. 'The Triple Focus', neuroscientifically supported, provokes faith in human illuminating human condition. But, little did they internalize, that crucial subtlety that change does start not in the other, neither from the outer.

**Franka Gregurović**