

Wisdom

Wisdom refers to acquisition and use of knowledge. This can be achieved through the strengths of creativity, curiosity, taking wider perspectives of the world, critical thinking and interest to learn new things. Wisdom consists of the know-how, judgment and flexibility to solve predominant life problems for the common good (Clayton, 1982; Sternberg, 1985).

Brief Historical Background to the Psychological study of Wisdom

- Since the beginning of the human culture, wisdom has been viewed as the ideal indicator of human development. Certainly, the psychological study of wisdom is still rather new compared to its philosophical treatment when considering that the very definition of philosophy is ‘love or pursuit of wisdom’. The identification of wisdom with individuals (such as wise persons), is the predominant approach in psychology. In fact, in the general historical literature on wisdom, the identification of wisdom with the mind and character of individuals is not the preferred mode of analysis. Wisdom is considered an ideal that is difficult to be fully represented in the isolated individual.

Definitions of Wisdom

- A first approach to the definition of wisdom from a psychological perspective is outlined in dictionaries. The major German historical dictionary, for instance, defined wisdom as ‘insight and knowledge about oneself and the world...and sound judgment in the case of difficult life problems’. Similarly, the Oxford dictionary includes ‘Good judgment and advice in difficult and uncertain matter of life’ in its definition of wisdom. Psychologists further specified the content and formal properties of wisdom related phenomena.