



Topic :Introspection Method
Subject Code :BED18001
Subject Name : Psychology of Learners and Learning
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INTROSPECTION METHOD

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Founder of Introspection Method

- Wilhelm Wundt pioneered the use of a technique known as introspection



Introspection Method

- Introspection is a method of self observation
- The word
 - Intro” means “within” and
 - “Spection” mean “looking”
- Hence, it is a method where an individual is looking within one self
- Stout considered that ‘to introspect’ is to attend to the working of one’s own mind in a systematic way

- Angel considered it as “looking inward”. In introspection, the individual peeps into his own mental state and observes his own mental processes
- Introspection method is the oldest method to collect data about the conscious experiences of the subject
- It is the process of self-examination where one perceives, analyses and reports one’s own feelings

For Example

- Suppose you are happy and in the state of happiness you look within yourself. It is said you are introspecting your own mental feelings and examine what is going on in your mental process in the state of happiness. Similarly, you may introspect yourself in the state of anger and fear etc. Introspection is also defined as the notice, which the mind takes of itself

Stages of Introspection Method

- There are three clear stages of introspection
 1. During the observation of external object, the person begins to ponder over his own mental state. For example while listening to music, which is to him pleasant or unpleasant, he starts thinking about his own mental state

2. The person begins to question the working of his own mind. He thinks and analyses, why has he said such or such things? Why has he talked in a particular manner? And so on
3. He tries to frame the laws and conditions of the mental processes: he thinks in terms of improvement of his reasoning or the control of his emotional stages. This stage helps in the advancement of our scientific knowledge

- Introspection method was widely used in the past. Its use in modern time is questioned
- It is considered unscientific and not in keeping in psychology which has recently emerged out as a positive science
- However, it is still being used by psychologists and though its importance is being questioned it is not totally discarded

Merits of Introspection Method

1. It is the cheapest and most economical method of studying behavior. We do not need any apparatus or laboratory for its use
2. This method can be used any time anywhere. You can introspect while walking, travelling, sitting on a bed & so on
3. It is the easiest method and readily available to an individual

Limitations of Introspection Method

1. In introspection, one needs to examine one's mental processes carefully in the form of feelings, thoughts and sensation. The state of one's mental processes is continuously changing. Therefore when one concentrates on introspecting a particular phase of one's mental activity that phase passes off. For example when you get angry at something and afterwards sit down to introspect calmly, the state of anger is sure to have passed off and so what you try to observe is not what is happening at that time with yourself but what had happened sometimes before

2. The data collected by introspection cannot be verified. An individual cannot pass through the same mental state again. There is no independent way to check the data
3. The data collected through introspection lacks validity and reliability. It is impossible to acquire validity and exactness in self-observation of one's own mental processes
4. The data collected by introspection is highly subjective. It has a danger of being biased and influenced by preconceptions of the individual

5. The observer and the observed are the same. Hence there is an ample scope for the individual to lie deliberately and hide the facts to mislead others
6. Introspection cannot be applied to children, animals and abnormal people
7. Introspection is logically defective one and the same person is the experimenter and observer. It is not possible for same individual to act as an experimenter as well as an observer. Thus introspection is logically defective

Conclusion

“The limitations of introspection can be overcome by practice and training, by remaining alert during introspection and by comparing results obtained by experts”



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