

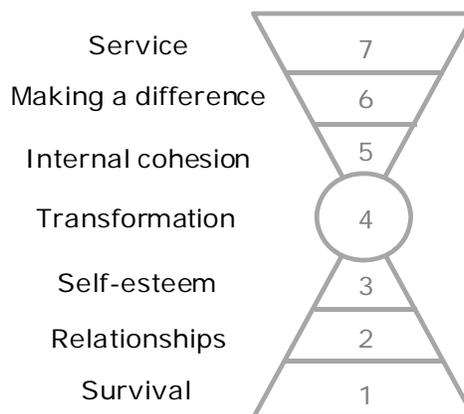
The Seven Levels of School Consciousness

By Richard Barrett

All human group structures grow and develop in consciousness in seven well-defined stages. Each stage focuses on a particular existential need that is common to the human condition. These seven existential needs are the principal motivating forces in all human affairs.

The level of growth and development of consciousness in a school or educational establishment depends on the ability of the leaders to create a culture that enables the school to satisfy the needs of all stakeholders—students, faculty, and parents.

The seven stages in the development and growth of the consciousness of a school or other type of educational establishment are summarised in the following table, and described in detail in the subsequent paragraphs. The table describing the Seven Levels of School Consciousness should be read starting from the bottom and working up.



Level	Focus	Motivation	
7	Service	Social responsibility, sustainability, and ethics. Long-term perspective. Future generations. Compassion, humility, wisdom, and forgiveness.	
6	Making a Difference	Partnerships and strategic alliances with other schools, parents and the local community. Mentoring and coaching. Employee fulfillment.	
5	Internal Cohesion	Shared vision and shared values. Integrity, trust, fairness, openness and transparency. Focus on creativity and commitment.	
4	Transformation	Adaptability, accountability, empowerment, participation and continuous learning. Diversity. Personal growth and development.	
3	Self-esteem	Focus on systems, processes, quality, excellence, and professional growth.	Bureaucracy, confusion, hierarchy, silo-mentality, and status seeking, Focus on image. Arrogance.
2	Relationship	Student, parent and employee satisfaction. Open communication and employee recognition.	Internal competition, manipulation and blame. Internal politics. Gender or ethnic discrimination.
1	Survival	Financial stability. Health, safety and welfare of students and all employees.	Excessive control and caution. Risk-averse. Short-term focus. Exploitation.
		HEALTHY MOTIVATIONS	UNHEALTHY MOTIVATIONS

The “lower” needs, levels 1 to 3, focus on the basic needs of the school—the financial stability of the school and the health and welfare of the children and staff; the satisfaction of the student population, and parents’ aspirations; and, smooth, efficient administrative systems and processes. Abraham Maslow referred to these as “deficiency” needs. We feel no sense of lasting satisfaction from being able to meet these needs, but we feel a sense of anxiety if these needs are not met.

The focus of the fourth level is transformation—a shift from fear-based, rigid, authoritarian, and bureaucratic hierarchies to more open, inclusive, adaptive systems of governance that empower faculty and administrative staff, and engage the student community and parents in the decision-making of the school.

The “higher” needs, levels 5 to 7, focus on the cultural cohesion and values alignment; mutually beneficial alliances and partnerships with other schools and the local community; and a strong focus on social responsibility. The emphasis at these higher levels is on enhancing the common good of all stakeholders—students, employees, parents, the local community, and society at large. Abraham Maslow referred to these as “growth” needs. When these needs are fulfilled they do not go away. They engender deeper levels of commitment and motivation.

Full Spectrum Consciousness

Full Spectrum schools display all the positive attributes of the Seven Levels of School Consciousness.

- They master survival consciousness by focusing on financial stability, and student and employee health and safety.
- They master relationship consciousness by focusing on open communication, employee recognition, and student and parent satisfaction.
- They master self-esteem consciousness by focusing on performance, results, quality, excellence, and best practices.
- They master transformation consciousness by focusing on adaptability, innovation, employee empowerment, student and parental participation, and continuous learning.
- They master internal cohesion consciousness by developing a culture based on a shared vision of the future, and shared values that engender an organisation-wide climate of trust.
- They master making a difference consciousness by creating partnerships with other schools, the local community, and parents, as well as by developing mentoring, coaching and leadership development programs for the faculty.
- They master service consciousness by focusing on social responsibility, long-term sustainability, and high ethical standards, as well as by embracing humility, compassion and forgiveness.