

## **HOLISTIC APPROACH IN EDUCATION- AN OVERVIEW**

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### **Abstract**

*Holistic Education is an approach which focuses on preparing students to meet any challenges they may face in life and in their academic career. The paper tries to find out the principles followed in the holistic approach in education and an understanding on the concept. Holistic education encompasses a wide range of philosophical orientations and pedagogical practices. Its focus is on wholeness, and it attempts to avoid excluding any significant aspects of the human experience. Holistic Education takes contemporary cultural influences such as the media and music and teaches young mind how to be human. It gives clarity to the biggest challenges in life and how to overcome obstacles, accomplish success, and what basic concepts need to be learned initially, in order to accomplish all of those which are kept for us later on in life.*

**Keywords: Holistic Education, learning, wholeness**

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## **Introduction**

Holistic education is a movement, began to take shape as a identifiable field of study and practice in the 1980s in North America (Miller, 2004). It emerged as an answer to the dominant worldview of mainstream education, often referred to the “mechanistic” or “Cartesian-Newtonian” worldview. Rather than attempting to provide a model of education, holistic education seeks to challenge the fragmented, Reductionistic assumptions of mainstream culture and education (Miller, 2000; Shriner & et al ,2005). In other words, holistic education is concerned with “underlying worldviews or paradigms in an attempt to transform the foundations of education (Nakagava,2001). As Miller (1992), one of the leaders of the movement, argues, Holistic education is not to be defined as a particular method or technique; it must be seen as a paradigm, a set of basic assumptions and principles that can be applied in diverse ways. Martin and Forbes (2004) stressed further by stating that at its most general level, what distinguishes holistic education from other forms of education are its goals, its attention to experiential learning, and the significance that it places on relationships and primary human values within the learning environment.

Holistic Education is a method which focuses on preparing students to meet any challenges they may face in life and in their academic career. The most important theories behind holistic education are learning about oneself, developing health relationships and positive social behaviors, social and emotional development, resilience, and the ability to view beauty, experience transcendence and truth.

In the ancient times a child used to get adequate support from families, religion, or old tribes no longer exists, holistic education seeks to modify learning of human goodness, personal greatness, and the joy of living both in trials and in successes. Pressure from competition in school, after-school activities, and the social pressure to look a certain way, as well as the violence which typically accompanies school children both physically, psychologically, and emotionally, takes away from a child's ability to learn. A child is compelled to perform as per the instructions by the parents or teachers; we are not ready to give the child wings to fly. Holistic education rectifies this. Holistic education notes that children need to not only develop academically, but develop the ability to survive in the modern world. School Social work as a field of Social work

profession also gave greater emphasis to make the child competent enough to be productive in the society. They should be able to rise and meet challenges which they confront in the future and contribute to the world in which they live. Lack of coping capacity and positive attitude in life has made children highly vulnerable to end their life even before it blossoms. Indubitably it is responsibility of the present education system to take care of moulding the children to recognize their strengths and to overcome their weaknesses.

This should begin from the childhood. Parents and teachers being the first socializing agents should help the children to learn to value themselves, their worth, and recognize their abilities and how to be able to do what they want in life. Doing what they want ties into the relationships that they build and how they treat those relationships. Holistic education teaches children about their immediate relationships with their friends and family as well as social development, health, and intellectual development. The idea of resilience is a learned quality, not one which is inherent and thus children must be taught to face difficulties in life and overcome them. The child should be taught how to be like a phoenix bird which emerged from ashes and spread melody to the world. This concept inspires children to observe truths, reality natural beauty, and the meaning of life.

### **The broad characteristics of Holistic education**

- 1) It nurtures the development of the whole person
- 2) It revolves around relationships (egalitarian, open, and democratic relationships)
- 3) It is concerned with life experiences (instead of “basic skills”)
- 4) It “recognizes that cultures are created by people and can be changed by people” (instead of conforming and replicating a established culture)
- 5) it is founded upon a “deep reverence for life and for the unknown (and never fully knowable) source of life.”

### **Principles of Holistic Education**

Holistic education upholds two principles (Miller, 2000)

- *A learning that connects the person to the world must start with the person—not some abstract image of the human being, but with the unique, living, breathing boy or girl, young man*

*or woman (or mature person, for that matter) who is in the teacher's presence. Each person is a dynamic constellation of experiences, feelings, ideas, dreams, fears, and hopes.*

- *Secondly, we must respond to the learner with an open, inquisitive mind and a sensitive understanding of the world he or she is growing into.*

The discourse in holistic education claim that views central to it are not novel but are, in fact, its philosophical thought was already existed in the society. In fact, the principles and practices of holistic education are already used by a number of institutions. The first principle emphatically mentions that the leaning should connect the person to the world must start in the presence of a person. The second principle states that one should respond to the learner with an open, inquisitive mind and a insightful understanding of the world they are moving into.

### **Core Qualities of Holistic Education**

Joseph (2009) identified the core qualities of holistic education as follows;

- There is concern for the interior life, for the feelings, aspirations, ideas and questions that each student brings to the learning process. The contemporary education is no longer viewed as the transmission of information or diffusion of ideas; instead it is an expedition innermost as well as outward into the world. It helps the children to understand the inner self and to connect to the world.
- Holistic education expresses an ecological consciousness; it recognizes that everything in the world exists in context. This involves a deep respect for the veracity of the biosphere, if not a sense of veneration for nature.
- It is a worldview that embraces diversity, both natural and cultural. It shuns ideology, categorization, and fixed answers, and instead appreciates the flowing interrelatedness of all life.
- It is an education that recognizes the innate potential of every student for intelligent and creative thinking. It is child-honouring education, because it respects the creative impulses at work within the unfolding child as much as, if not more than, the cultural imperatives that conventional schooling seeks to overlay onto the growing personality.

Thus, holistic education is essentially a democratic education, concerned with both individual freedom and social responsibility. It is education for a culture of peace, for sustainability and

ecological literacy, and for the development of humanity's inherent morality and spirituality (Cox, 2007).

Martin and Forbes (2004) divide their discussion into two categories: the idea of Ultimacy and Basil Bernsteins (1996) concept of learned Competence.

#### Ultimacy

1. *Spirituality is an important component in holistic education as it emphasizes the connectedness of all living things and emphatically stresses the synchronization between the inner self and outer life.*
2. *Psychological: As explained by Maslow in the Need Hierarchy theory the self-actualization, holistic education believes that each person should strive to be all that they can be in life. There are no deficits in learners, just differences. It believes in the uniqueness of individual.*
3. *Undefined; as in a person developing to the ultimate extent a human could reach and, thus, moving towards the highest aspirations of the human spirit.*

#### **Learned competence**

1. *Freedom (in a psychological sense).*
2. *Good-judgment (self-governance).*
3. *Meta learning (each student learns in their own way).*
4. *Social ability (more than just learning social skills).*
5. *Refining Values (development of character).*
6. *Self Knowledge (emotional development).*

#### **Four 'Pillars of Learning' in Holistic Education**

For methodological purpose only, holistic education has noted four pillars of learning in the twenty –first century. UNESCO (2004) has also indicated these same four pillars, although with slight differences (Nava, 2001).

### **Learning to Learn**

This starts with learning to ask. The inquisitiveness to know more and gain more knowledge. To ask is a natural act of consciousness in its search for knowledge. Its real purpose is not so much for the question to be answered as to be explored. It helps in empowering the attributes of consciousness to exercise skills such as concentration, listening, perceiving, and developing curiosity, intuitiveness, and creativity. Learning to learn means having the ability to direct and take responsibility for one's own learning, for keeping one self up-to-date, for knowing where to look for knowledge. It is particularly to scientific awareness or rather creating a scientific temper. (Nava, 2001).

### **Learning to Do**

In the contemporary system, this means learning to change society through logical, intellectual and responsible action. Learning to do is learning a skill and become productive. It also implies learning to adapt to the requirements of work and ability to work in a team, along with the strategically using facts to resolve problems and also to make rational decisions in generating quality products and services. In also make us understand how to take risks as well as take the initiative ( Shriner, 2005).

### **Learning to Live Together**

This means learning to live responsibly, respecting and cooperating with other people and, in general, with all the living organisms on the planet. It accepts the uniqueness of every individual. Learning must overcome prejudice, stubbornness, discrimination, authoritarianism and stereotypes, and all that leads to argument, disagreement and war. The fundamental principle of this pillar of learning is interdependence or knowledge of the network of life. (Nava, 2001) . This pillar implies an education taking two harmonizing paths: on one level, discovery of others and experience of shared purposes throughout life. It implies the development of stupendous qualities such as: knowledge and understanding of self and others, positive reception of the diversity of the humanity and an understanding of the similarities and interdependence of all human being. It enhances the feeling of empathy and cooperative social behavior in caring and sharing. Respect of other people and their cultures and value systems, capability of encountering others and

resolving conflicts through dialogue; and competency in working towards common objectives (UNESCO 1996).

### **Learning to Be**

Learning to be means the voyage to find the essence of oneself which goes beyond the thoughts and action. The universal dimensions of human values rather than individual values are discovered. Holistic education nurtures this learning in a special way, by recognizing the human being as a basically spiritual being in search of meaning (Nava, 2001). ‘Learning to be’ may therefore be interpreted in one way as learning to be *human*, through acquisition of knowledge, skills and values conducive to the development of personality in its intellectual, moral, cultural and physical dimensions. This implies a curricula aiming at cultivating and refining qualities of imagination and creativity, acquiring universally shared human values and developing potentials. It enhances aspects of a person’s memory, reasoning, aesthetic sense, physical capacity and communication/social skills. It helps in developing critical thinking and exercising independent judgment and developing personal commitment and responsibility (Schreiner2005).

### **Conclusion**

Holistic education is an approach that can meet the needs of all types of learners and that mould future citizens who will contribute a concern and mindfulness for the society and the planet. Both global education and environmental education, which are also based on the principles of interdependence and connectedness, are embedded in it. Based on this interdependent perspective, holistic education seeks to create a society where we live in harmony with the ecosystem. It discards consumerism as the dominant approach of being in contemporary society. Instead, it seeks education which is rooted in the fundamental realities of nature and existence. Holistic education seeks to connect the part with the whole. Holistic education calls on us to restore the vision in the primary goal of Education is sustainability.

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