

HOLISTIC EDUCATION: A NEW APPROACH TO TEACHING AND LEARNING PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

Holistic education focuses on the fullest possible development of the person, encouraging individuals to become the very best or finest that they can be and enabling them to experience all they can from life and reach their goals (Forbes 2003). it is more than the education of the whole student and addresses the very broadest development of the whole person at the cognitive and affective levels. it emphasizes the education of the student beyond the confines of the classroom and moves the concept of a child-centered educational approach to a much more radical programme of education. Holistic education is based on the principle that students find identity and purpose in life by connecting to the community, nature, and humanitarian values. The purpose of holistic education is not only to prepare students for academic success, but to also enable them to learn the challenges of living as a whole (learning about themselves, about healthy relationships, about social responsibility, compassion, etc). The present paper explains the features of holistic approach and characteristics of a critical learner. Also it gives certain implications for student and teacher and sites some advantages of this.

Robin Ann Martin (2003) describes, "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." A holistic way of thinking tries to encompass and integrate multiple layers of meaning and experience rather than defining human possibilities narrowly. Any approach to education must ask itself, what is the goal of education?

Holistic education aims at helping students be the most that they can be. Abraham Maslow referred to this as "self-actualization". Education with a holistic perspective is concerned with the

development of every person's intellectual, emotional, social, physical, artistic, creative and spiritual potentials. It seeks to engage students in the teaching/learning process and encourages personal and collective responsibility. Holism into education as a movement, not only does reveal its necessity for this modern era, with its institutions and values in crisis, but, perhaps, raises a middle ground solution for various problems.

What are the features of holistic education?

The quality, of the, learning experience is undoubtedly important, and the current emphasis on improving the quality of the teaching and learning

situation is a positive development in educational system. Parents, educators, and concerned citizens around the world are asking questions about how best to prepare children and youth for successful adulthood in the advanced century. Though every human society has dealt with issues of preparing children and youth for adulthood, the potential benefits have never been greater for providing the proper learning experiences so that young people can flourish as adults.

A programme of holistic education aims to encompass all aspects of personal learning and growth and emphasizes the development of active relationships at all levels, whether these are between the subject domains, between individuals and their peer groups and communities or between the individual and the world around them. Miller (1991: 3) has proposed that education may be described as holistic when it exemplifies the following characteristics.

- Holistic education nurtures the broad development of the students and focuses on their intellectual, emotional, social, physical, creative or intuitive, aesthetic and spiritual potentials.
- It promotes the importance of relationships at all levels within a learning community in which the educator and student work together in an open and collaborative relationship.
- There is an emphasis on life experience and learning beyond the confines of the classroom and the formal educational environment towards education as growth, discovery and a broadening of horizons. It encourages a desire to elicit meaning and understanding and to engage with the world.

The holistic approach is based on the view that teaching is a social activity. The essence of the social activity consists of the roles played by the learner and the teacher. The holistic learner is assumed to want to achieve the highest aspect of

awareness of knowledge, and appreciates the value that it

adds to his or her life. The holistic teacher is assumed to want to develop the learner as a critical, confident, independent learner and provide the holistic learner with critical faculties that enable action in real situations. The interaction between the teacher and the student is a social act that needs to

encompass the personal, professional, social, and human needs of the learner. These needs are not merely the need to learn knowledge, but also the need to be heard, the need to be praised, the need to be accepted into the community of learners, as well as other human needs.

Thus, holistic approach demands critical learners who are confident, independent and having critical thinking ability. Students are allowed to learn themselves by constructing knowledge and reflection. And the holistic teacher's task is to provide such an assistant which helps him to be a critical learner. Considering the features of holistic approach it is suggested that constructivist theory can best be applied in the classroom situation" for the all round development of the students.

DEVELOPING CRITICAL LEARNERS:

The holistic approach contains activities that we all do as teachers. Being a holistic teacher he has the aim to develop critical learners. To achieve the aim holistic approach provides five different aspects which help the teacher in this regard.

- **The knowledge aspect:** The holistic approach introduces the critical learner to the process of knowledge generation and acquisition in society through the discipline knowledge. The holistic teacher aims to enable the critical learner to become an owner of knowledge. The holistic teacher makes students think about their personal constructs of knowledge by

considering what education is. By relating the holistic teacher's experiences of knowledge and personal constructs, the social A nature of the teaching interaction is emphasized. In particular, it brings to the foreground the critical aspect of the holistic approach.

- **The Self aspect:** The self is the basis of the personal construction system. The holistic teacher needs to appreciate the self-discovery process in students and help to externalize it in the teaching process. The critical learner's self discovery process. can be externalized in a teaching session in various ways. Reflective practice is the best way to self awareness which ultimately develop critical learners.
- **THE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ASPECT:** The personal development aspect is practical. The teacher uses the discipline knowledge to help the student develop this aspect. The implementation of the personal and professional aspect has an important role to demonstrate the relevance of the discipline knowledge.
- **THE DISCIPLINE ASPECT:** teachers concentrate most of their efforts on the discipline aspect of teaching interaction.. Criticality is developed through the subject knowledge. I
- **THE LEARNING AND TEACHING ASPECT:** implementation of teaching and learning aspect in the holistic approach is focused on the development of critical learners and elicitation and challenging of personal constructs. The holistic approach requires reflection on the teaching and its constraints in a deep manner.

Holistic approaches to teaching and learning offer a broad perspective of learning that stretches beyond the academic achievements of an individual, to consider the development of the whole person. Central to our teaching philosophies is the deep seated desire to see students achievement. We hope the students develop real love of learning and a life-

long desire to go on learning beyond the classroom. Our student-focused approach impacts on course planning and design: we know we need to be flexible to work with the range of students enrolled in a course, with differing levels of knowledge, diverse learning styles and the highly individual hurdles each person faces. We feel it is essential to show respect for the individuality of each students and, through an understanding of the challenges they face in their learning environments, to inspire them to reach their goals.

This process is based on the fact that people do not behave and act as robots, by just using their brains to do their work, but they also have emotions and spiritual thoughts that make them human and separate them from the machines. Actually for most of the world's ancient cultures mind and heart are not considered separately but as complementary dimensions of one unit, that work and act together to reach a state of intelligence. This view that the heart is a major center of cognition, emotion, will, insight, wisdom and spirit is the most important common feature of different cultures, tradition and world religions in the history of mankind (see Arguelles 2011, .p.1) despite their cultural differences. Holistic approach has different dimensions in classroom practices. They are the followings.

- **Engaging learners:** Engaging learners in the process of learning involves teachers adopting and fostering active, interactive and f deep learning approaches so that learners can interact meaningfully with the concepts, materials, processes and people in a course.
- **Designing for learning**
Designing for learning requires planning and design of appropriate curriculum, activities, environments and assessment to support student learning and achieve planned student learning outcomes.
- **Assessing for learning**

Assessment informs what and how students learn. Setting appropriate and challenging standards, assessing the learner and their learning progress (through diagnostic, process and outcome assessment) are integral to learning process.

- **Managing for learning**
Managing teaching and student learning is enhanced by effective administration and organization of time to plan and generate resources, organize and plan systems and people. It requires an engagement with the policies and organizational priorities that impact on teaching and learning.

These four dimensions cover pedagogical / organizational knowledge, discipline, curriculum, learner, environment and scholarship. Each of these contextual elements can be exploded into a set of scholarly goals which academic staff and teaching teams can draw upon to identify relevant and meaningful capabilities which can guide their own approaches to teaching and learning. A holistic approach can be described with various adjectives in the field of modern education. For a large group of modern educators the word holistic has the meaning of a multi- or interdisciplinary approach in teaching process. Speaking of such an approach in education we should imagine this as a process, where a student does not come along with separated lessons in his school program, but instead subjects are taught him by the teaching personal, that aim the better organization of the knowledge he must learn (see Argyros 2009, p.182).

Implications of holistic approach for the students

Holistic education prepares a student for lifelong learning in which the educational focus .moves towards the life skills, attitudes and personal awareness that the student will need in an increasingly complex world. Consequently there is an emphasis on a broad educational approach that addresses the intellectual, personal and interpersonal development of the student and puts in

place many of the values, attitudes and skills that will serve the student well throughout life.

- Holistic approaches to education develop the social and academic maturity of the learner that they accept the challenges of life and develop their own understanding, learn from the errors. They take responsibility of their own personal academic growth.
- They can set clear and realistic targets, prioritize conflicting demands and plan for success. They persist in their tasks and maintain high standards in their outcomes.
- They can think creatively, feel empowered and confident to find solutions and will take risks in new and unfamiliar areas of thinking and action.
- They act and learn with care, consideration, compassion and empathy in their interactions with others.
- They demonstrate a reflective approach and an attitude of continuous improvement.
- They demonstrate effective written and oral communication skills. They have sufficient confidence to change and adapt their style of communications should the situation or circumstances change.
- They contribute actively and collaboratively, they challenge others with , respect and encourage the decision-making process. .
- Through an understanding of their subject areas, their interdependencies and interrelationships, they can appreciate the interconnections in human knowledge; they can appreciate and debate global issues and the impact of human activity on the environment.
- They can use information resources effectively,

Holistic education: Implications for the teacher

Holistic education challenges teachers to think differently about student cognitive and affective development. The working relationship between the student and the teacher changes; it becomes more inclusive, dynamic and egalitarian.

The appropriate pedagogical approach will become one of active, planned interventions that are developed for students to meet their development needs. The teacher's skills of facilitation, guidance and mentoring will feature strongly in promoting learning and understanding at both the academic and social levels.

The holistic teacher elicits students' 'construction system' (Kelly, 2000b) or their self characterization in lectures, seminars, and tutorials. The purpose of the elicitation is to design true interaction meaningful to students. It is the basis of introducing subject knowledge, which enable the students to relate it to their personal constructs.

As the aim of the holistic approach is to develop critical learners, it is necessary develop students' personal constructs that are relevant to achieving this aim. The types of personal constructs that have been elicited are: social, institutional, knowledge, and belief constructs. Knowledge and belief constructs are especially important, because students own understanding of what they regard as knowledge and how it is brought about are central to developing critical learners. By surfacing personal constructs students can begin to see themselves in the process of knowledge generation, questioning, and learning.

Teachers must also examine the learning culture within their school so that it is conducive to creating an inclusive learning community that stimulates the growth of a person's creative and inquisitive engagement with the world. The aim becomes the development of healthy, curious individuals who can learn what they need to know and apply it in any new context in which they find themselves and who are self-motivated and confident learners.

WHY HOLISTIC APPROACH IS IMPORTANT?

- Holistic education broadens and deepens the educational process.

- It represents a planned approach that encourages personal responsibility, promotes a positive attitude to learning and develops social skills. These are essentials in the modern world in which we live.
- It clarifies the purpose of this educational approach for students, teachers and parents.

Holistic education does not exist in a single, consistent form. It is more than the education of the whole student and addresses the very broadest development of the whole person at the cognitive and affective levels. It emphasizes the education of the student beyond the traditional classroom and moves the concept of a child-centred educational approach to a much more radical programme of education. It applies various strategies to develop criticality among the learners, to develop reflective thinking, to construct knowledge of contextualities. It also encourages interaction between student and teachers' which helps in developing self motivated and confident learners.

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