

Holistic Development in Children: A comprehensive case study

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Abstract

Holistic development refers to human development that is meant to involve all the parts of a person. This is development designed to accommodate physical development, mental growth, emotional development and social development. Holistic development sees the child in the round, as a whole person – physically, emotionally, intellectually, socially, morally, culturally and spiritually. Holistic education is a philosophy of education based on the premise that each person finds identity, meaning, and purpose in life through connections to the community, to the natural world, and to humanitarian values such as compassion and peace. Holistic education aims to call forth from people an intrinsic reverence for life and a passionate love of learning.

Key Words: Children, Development, Design, Growth, Social

INTRODUCTION

Since public schooling began, there have been a number of concerned parties who have expressed feelings of disappointment with public education. One of those concerned parties was Johann Pestalozzi, a Swiss humanitarian known as one of the fathers of holistic education. His philosophies suggested a reform in education to include spirituality and psychological development. In the 1970s, holism became known as a new perspective with a significant following. In 1988, John P. Miller published a book titled “The Holistic Curriculum.”

A few things that young children need to learn, according to Holistic-Education.net, include emotional literacy and resilience. Holistic-Education.net says proper development of these aspects help children with health and self-esteem. Holistic education focuses on developing a child’s sense of self and ability to form and maintain relationships [1].

Holistic educators hope to capture a child’s attention and hold it through appealing to their sense of awe.

They believe traditional forms of education lie at the roots of modern problems. Through holistic education,

children learn more than simple academic subjects. They develop social skills, explore who they are and learn a respect for the earth. Many diverse learning techniques are applied. Flexible pacing allows children to learn at their own speed. Holistic educators realize each child learns differently, and try to mold educational efforts to each child’s needs.

Purpose of Holistic Education

The purpose of holistic education is to prepare students to meet the challenges of living as well as academics. Holistic education believes it is important for young people to learn:

- About themselves.
- About healthy relationships and pro-social behavior.
- Social development.
- Emotional development.
- Resilience.
- To see beauty, have awe, experience transcendence, and appreciate some sense of "truths."

Consider your life's greatest challenges. What did you need to know to overcome the obstacles you faced? Consider your greatest successes. What did you need to know in order to achieve those successes? Then ask yourself, how many of those things that I needed to know did I learn in school?

For thousands of years before schools there were social groups which taught people about the great adventure of being human; its trials and tribulations, its

challenges, and its enormous possibilities for human goodness and even greatness. These groups were extended families, communities or tribes or clans, and religions. For the most part, these groups have disappeared or become compartmentalized in people's lives [2].

Now, it is predominantly popular culture (the media, music) and schools from which young people can learn about what it means to be human. But culture has its own agenda (not the welfare of children), and schools were not designed to replace extended families, communities, and religions. They were designed to prepare people for the world of work; to give them the skill sets that would help them up the ladder of material success.

Why Holistic Education?

Parents, in increasing numbers, are seeking alternatives to mainstream education. Few could criticize the commitment to academic excellence that most schools and teachers have and work hard to actualize. But more and more parents realize that just learning academics is not enough, and they see young people in their communities suffering from a lack of needed learning, and society suffering as well [3].

Parents worry about the negative social influence they see affecting their children. Parents see themselves having less impact on their children's behavior, relationships, and attitudes than the media and marketing which directly targets children. As a result children's senses of themselves and self-images are under pressure. This pressure is expressed in:

- Increased competitiveness in many aspects of a child's social life, such as sports, out-of-school activities, and of course, school.
- Obsessive concern for their "look," from their body shape to their clothes.
- Violence in many forms, from the physical to the psychological and emotional.

Parents are also worried about negative learning attitudes they see developing in their children. Parents

saw their children as infants eager to learn, and this eagerness dissipated as these same children's schooling increased. Learning becomes a necessary chore, driven by rewards and punishments, and too often devoid of direct meaning in their children's lives.

Many parents also look at our current society in which social problems seem to be getting worse; in which those considered successful are too often greedy, corrupt, and brutal; in which families and communities seem increasingly dysfunctional; and they ask, "Why aren't we as humans learning what we need to know in order to live good and meaningful lives?"

It doesn't appear that we will learn such things from learning more mathematics, literature, or history. Parents see the need for their children to learn these other things as well as academics, and they look for schools that give time, attention, energy, and resources, to such learning. Parents generally do not come to holistic education from philosophical musings, but from a perceived need for their children that they feel is not currently met [4].

Children need to develop academic capacities as these are required to live in the modern world. But much more than this is needed, and adults looking at what was required in order to meet the many challenges of their lives and the successes they have had can attest to this. The essential learning that we all need should begin in childhood.

Children need to begin to learn about themselves. The value of "knowing thyself" is so undisputed as to be a cliché, but conveying to children that they are worth knowing about seems fundamental to healthy self-respect and self-esteem.

Children also need to learn about relationships. Relationships are the greatest source of human happiness and misery, yet most children only have the relationships they see in their immediate surroundings (e.g., family, friends, etc.) and on the media (which are usually caricatures and unreal) to learn from. Sociology and child development psychology repeatedly affirms that learning about relationships is acquired and not

inherent, and yet the institutions created for children's learning have little to no time nor resources given to helping children learn how to have healthy, productive relationships [5].

Learning about relationships is sometimes seen as part of social development, which includes pro-social behavior and social "literacy" (i.e., learning to see social influence). As our societies become increasingly pluralist, complex, and fraught, social development becomes more difficult as well as more necessary.

Over the last decade research has demonstrated that emotional development, or what has become known as "emotional literacy," is of fundamental importance. Learning emotional literacy has been shown to be crucial for intellectual development, social development, aesthetic development, and health.

Studies have shown that resilience is not an inherent quality, but one that is learned. Resilience is fundamental to overcoming difficulties, facing challenges, and long-term success in any field. Children must learn resilience.

Finally, children must learn that seeing beauty, having awe, experiencing transcendence, and appreciating those timeless "truths" which have inspired and sustained individuals and cultures are a natural part of life. The mundane and material (while important) have assumed too great a place in modern life, leaving a hunger for meaning that is often difficult to satisfy.

The diagram above shows the elements of development all are interlinked and interchangeable depending on a person's individual learning pattern and needs (Fig. 1). The circular distribution of the elements shows that learning is not necessarily linear, but one of increasing spirals depending on age and variety of experiences and one's type of learning interest and pattern. The circular flow of the diagram above shows how the different elements are interconnected as part of a holistic entity which the learners are part of discovering themselves within the natural world. As is recognized by the popularity and success of Forest School as well Steiner and Montessori schools.

That was the education bit to encourage people to have a look at things, but there is also resurgence in planting and fertilizing by the moon phases and getting back to older varieties of cereals, such as spelt which are planted in spring rather than in winter.

It is never too late to start learning and discovering what nature is about and how to enjoy yourself and challenge yourself in the outdoors.

It is difficult to map the history of holistic education because many feel that the core ideas of holism are not new but "timeless and found in the sense of wholeness in humanity's religious impetus" (Forbes, 1996).[1] On the other hand, the roots of holistic education can be traced back to several major contributors. Originating theorists include Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Thoreau, Bronson Alcott, Johann Pestalozzi, Friedrich Fröbel, and Francisco Ferrer. More recent theorists are Rudolf Steiner, Maria Montessori, Francis Parker, John Dewey, John Caldwell Holt, George Dennison Kieran Egan, Howard Gardner, Jiddu Krishnamurti, Carl Jung, Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, Paul Goodman, Ivan Illich, and Paulo Freire. With the ideas of these pioneers in mind, many feel that the core ideas of holistic education did not truly take form until the cultural paradigm shift that began in the 1960s. After this, the holism movement in psychology emerged in the 1970s where, during this time, "an emerging body of literature in science, philosophy and cultural history provided an overarching concept to



Figure 1: Holistic Development: Learning in nature

describe this way of understanding education – a perspective known as holism [6-9].”

Significant forward motion was accomplished by the first National Holistic Education Conference that was conducted with The University of California, San Diego in July 1979, that included 31 workshops. The Conference was presented by The Mandala Society and The National Center for the Exploration of Human Potential. The title was Mind: Evolution or Revolution?

The Emergence of Holistic Education

For six years after that the Holistic Education Conference was combined with the Mandala Holistic Health Conferences at the University of California, San Diego, with about three thousand professionals participating each year. Out of this came the Journal of Holistic Education and the observation that educators think they are teaching the basic three R’s: Reading Writing and Arithmetic. With Holistic Education the basic three R’s are Education for: Relationships, Responsibility and Reverence for all life [10-12].

Study Objectives

The following objectives were formulated for the present study:

1. To study the opinions of different professionals regarding Holistic Development in Children.
2. To study the opinions of people on whether society can be transformed by Holistic Development in Children.
3. To know whether people are aware of Holistic Development.
4. To know whether people want Holistic Development in Children.
5. To know the reasons behind deterioration in Society.
6. To know whether people are willing to adopt Holistic Development in Children to make them better and complete individual.

In this study, the investigator has taken a sample of fifty comprising college lecturers and readers, school teachers, students, professionals, from Lucknow (U.P.). Further, the sample has been restricted to urban region.

The study has been further delimited to the people who know English i.e. they can read and understand the language

MATHODOLOGY

Data Collection and Presentation

The questionnaire was given personally to selected respondents (the sample) and collected the next day. The quantitative data collected through the administration of tools on selected sample are raw. These data need to be tabulated, organized, analyzed and interpreted for drawing sound conclusion and valid generalization.

For tabulation of data, a table of observation was made. In this, 1, 2 and 3 numbers were given for yes, no and not aware respectively for each question. A table of consolidated response of all respondents has been generated. A table of consolidated response of all respondents in percentage has also been given as shown in Table 1. A line chart, shown in Fig. 2, has been generated as per the data in Table 2.

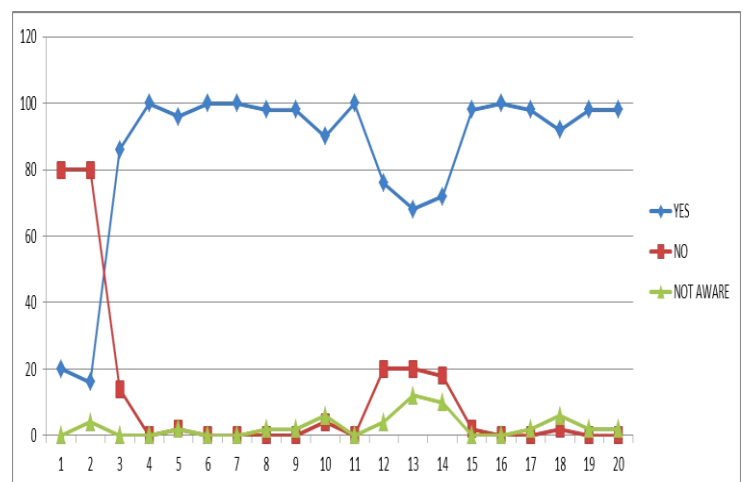


Figure 2: Response of respondents in percentage.

Table 2: Consolidated response of all respondent

Respondents	Question No.																			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Agree	10	08	43	50	48	50	50	49	49	45	50	38	34	36	49	50	49	46	49	49
Disagree	40	40	07	0	01	0	0	0	0	02	0	10	10	09	01	0	0	01	0	0
Not Aware	0	02	0	0	01	0	0	01	01	03	0	02	06	05	0	0	1	03	01	01
TOTAL	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50

RESULT & DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study are as follows:

1. Majority of the respondents were not satisfied with the existing system of education.
2. A Major part of respondents believed that the present education system is not producing good and complete individuals.
3. Majority of the respondents agreed that overall development of a child is lacking in today’s education system.
4. All of the respondents believed that overall development of a child is required for producing better individuals in the society.
5. Most of the respondents believed that we should mold our educational efforts to each child’s needs.
6. All of the respondents believed that we should prepare children so as to meet the challenges of living as well as academics.
7. All the respondents believed that it’s important for children to know about themselves.
8. Majority of the respondents agreed that children should be taught about Social and Emotional Development.
9. Almost all of the respondents believed that healthy relationship and pro-social behavior should be taught to children.
10. Majority of the respondents agreed that today’s children have an obsessive concern for their “look”.

11. All of the respondents believed that children should be taught what they need to know in order to live good and meaningful lives.
12. Most of the respondents (76 percent) believed that parents today are worried about negative learning attitudes they see developing in children. 20 percent of them believed otherwise, while 04 percent were not aware.
13. Most of the respondents believed that learning is devoid of direct meaning in children’s lives. 20 percent believe otherwise while 12percent were not certain.
14. Majority of the respondents believed that in our current society social problems seem to be getting worse. Although 18 percent of them believed otherwise, and 10 percent were not aware.
15. Almost all the respondents agreed that Holistic Development of children is a need today.
16. All the respondents believed that Physical, Mental, Emotional and Social Development in children is a need today.
17. Almost all the respondents believed that there is a need to add spirituality and psychological development in children today.
18. Most of the respondents agreed to the statement.

“Holistic education is a philosophy of education based on the premise that each person finds identity, meaning and purpose in life through connections to the community, to the natural world and to humanitarian values such as compassion and peace.”

19. Almost all of the respondents (98 percent) believed that Holistic development will make children better individuals. Only one was not aware.

20. Almost all of the respondents (98 percent) agreed that Holistic development in children will transform our society.

Suggestions for further Studies: Some of the topics for further studies may be as follows:

- I. Value of child in family life.
- II. Study of Core Values/ Human Values.
- III. Interpersonal Skills in a company or institution.
- IV. Value Adoption – The Need for Better Society.
- V. Value Crisis – Issues and Practices.
- VI. Study of Attitudinal Changes.
- VII. Growth and Development Based On Values – An Integrated Approach
- VIII. Causes and Remedial Action for Challenges in Value Adoption

Table 2: Response of respondents in percentage (%)

Question	Yes	No	Not Aware	Total
1	20	80	0	100
2	16	80	04	100
3	86	14	0	100
4	100	0	0	100
5	96	02	02	100
6	100	0	0	100
7	100	0	0	100
8	98	0	02	100
9	98	0	02	100
10	90	04	06	100
11	100	0	0	100
12	76	20	04	100
13	68	20	12	100
14	72	18	10	100
15	98	02	0	100
16	100	0	0	100
17	98	0	02	100
18	92	02	06	100
19	98	0	02	100
20	98	0	02	100

Observing, analyzing and interpreting the data and result it is now understood the majority of the respondents responded in Yes i.e. majority of them agreed that: The existing system of education is not satisfactory. The present education system is not producing good and complete individuals. Overall development of a child is lacking in today's education system. Overall development of a child is required for

producing better individuals in the society. We should mold our educational efforts to each child's needs. We should prepare children so as to meet the challenges of living as well as academics. It is important for children to know about themselves. Children should be taught about Social and Emotional Development. Healthy relationship and pro-social behavior should be taught to children. Today's children have an obsessive concern for their "look". Children should be taught what they need to know in order to live good and meaningful lives. Parents today are worried about negative learning attitudes they see developing in children. Learning is devoid of direct meaning in children's lives. In our current society social problems seem to be getting worse. Holistic Development of children is a need today. Physical, Mental, Emotional and Social Development in children is a need today. There is a need to add spirituality and psychological development in children today. Holistic education is a philosophy of education based on the premise that each person finds identity, meaning and purpose in life through connections to the community, to the natural world and to humanitarian values such as compassion and peace. Holistic development will make children better individuals. Holistic development in children will transform our society.

CONCLUSION

Seeing the above opinions of the respondents we can conclude that there is an urgent need for Holistic Development of children, if we want to produce better individuals in the society, and make it worth living.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST: None

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