

NOT JUST MARKS: A HOLISTIC VIEW OF EDUCATION

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Abstract:

According to the National Education Policy 2020, holistic development refers to the overall growth of a child, including physical, intellectual, and emotional well-being. In contrast to the traditional education system, which prioritizes marks, grading, and comparison among students, the modern holistic education approach emphasizes the development of the “whole child.” This includes participation in various activities such as physical health, sportsmanship, and experiential learning, along with the enhancement of intellectual abilities like memory, intelligence, and critical thinking. Additionally, emotional development, often referred to as emotional quotient (EQ), plays a crucial role in helping students understand and manage their emotions and interact effectively with others. This perspective not only focuses on academic achievement but also emphasizes overall growth, understanding, and well-being. Thus, holistic education aims to create balanced individuals who are capable of contributing meaningfully in different areas of life.

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Introduction:

Holistic development is not a new concept in education; its roots can be traced back to ancient systems such as the Gurukul tradition and Greek philosophy, where equal importance was given to the development of mind, body, and values. The term “holistic” is derived from the concept of holism, introduced by Jan Smuts, which emphasizes that systems and their properties should be viewed as wholes rather than merely as collections of parts. Over time, several educational thinkers contributed to this idea, including Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, and John Dewey, who highlighted child-centred and experiential learning. Later, the concept of holistic education was further developed and popularized by John P. Miller.

Holistic education is aligned with approaches such as Waldorf and Montessori systems, which emphasize interconnected learning, humanistic values, and real-life experiences. It focuses on the overall development of the “whole child,” including Intelligence Quotient (IQ), Emotional Quotient (EQ), and social and physical growth. In recent times, this approach has gained formal recognition through the National Education Policy 2020, which highlights the importance of moving beyond traditional, marks-oriented education towards a more comprehensive and balanced form of learning.

Objectives:

- To analyze the concept of holistic development in education.
- To compare traditional education with holistic approach
- To highlight the contribution of various educational thinkers in holistic education

- To study the role of National Education Policy 2020 in promoting holistic development

Research Methodology:

The information has been collected from various sources such as books, research articles, and educational references. The study involves the analysis of different sources to understand the concept of holistic development. It also includes a comparison between the traditional grading system and the modern approach of assessment.

Holistic Development: The Overview

This study is based on the analysis of various secondary sources, including books and educational references related to holistic development. Holistic education emphasizes the overall growth of learners by integrating physical, intellectual, emotional, and social aspects of development. It is closely associated with humanistic and progressive approaches to education, where learning is not limited to marks, grading systems, or memorization, but focuses on the continuous development of a student's behaviour, understanding, and abilities.

Holistic education also highlights the importance of real-life experiences and their connection with learning. Students are encouraged to relate what they learn in classrooms to their daily lives and surroundings. Values taught during the learning process are reflected in their actions and behaviour, helping them to respond effectively in real-world situations. In this way, education becomes meaningful and practical rather than theoretical.

Furthermore, holistic development is based on the idea of interconnectedness, where all aspects of life are linked to each other. As reflected in The Holistic Curriculum, learning involves connections between mind, body, and spirit, as well as relationships with the environment, community, and knowledge across subjects. This idea is also supported by Chief Seattle, who stated that “all things are connected like the blood which unites one family.” This reflects the holistic view that learning is closely connected with reality and everyday life. This approach views human beings as a combination of interacting dimensions, including physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual aspects. Therefore, holistic education aims to develop well-balanced individuals who are capable of understanding, connecting, and contributing meaningfully to the world around them.

Traditional vs Holistic Education:

1. Focus on Marks vs Focus on Skills

- In the traditional education system, emphasis was placed on marks, grades, and percentages, where students often struggled to achieve higher grades such as A or A+ and above 80%. In contrast, the holistic approach focuses on skills, where importance is given to what students actually understand and how they apply it in their day-to-day life. As it is often said, “knowledge prepares you, but skills empower you,” highlighting the importance of skill development in education. Skills play a crucial role in a student's life, as they support future growth, including problem-solving, critical thinking, and creativity.

2. Remembering information v/s knowing its meaning

- Memorizing and understanding are two different aspects of learning. Memorization mainly focuses on memory and recalling power, whereas understanding refers to grasping the actual concept and explaining

it in one's own words. The shift from memorization to understanding is an important journey, where students develop the ability to express their ideas clearly in their own language. While memorization may support short-term performance, understanding remains with the learner for a longer time and helps in deeper learning.

3. Competition v/s Growth

- In the earlier education system, there was a strong focus on competition, where students were compared with each other and judged based on performance. However, the present approach emphasizes growth, where the focus is on how a student develops through holistic education. Growth refers to overall development, including educational progress and behavior. While competition may help students develop intelligence and generate ideas through comparison, it can also limit innovation and creative thinking. In contrast, a growth-oriented approach encourages students to focus on their own development and supports innovative thinking.

Scope of Holistic Development:

Scope refers to opportunities and possibilities. Holistic development provides a great opportunity for overall personality development, which reflects a person's lifestyle and growth. To build a successful career, it is important to adapt to the changing and advanced era, especially the continuous changes in the job market and educational field.

In today's time, the use of digital technology is very important as almost everything is becoming digital, and students are also becoming digitally smart. Therefore, assessment systems like progress cards should also be updated to evaluate the overall performance of students instead of only academic marks.

Holistic development also promotes discipline, responsibility, and a balanced personality, helping students prepare better for real-life challenges.

Future Scope of Holistic Development:

Holistic development refers to the overall development of an individual and has a significant impact on future career and life. In the future, jobs will not depend only on degrees or theoretical knowledge, but on the skills and experiences an individual possesses. Skills such as communication, capability, adaptability, problem-solving, and the ability to face different situations play a crucial role in surviving in the modern era. Qualities like leadership and emotional management are also important for standing out in the future.

Holistic development helps in building confidence and enhances thinking ability, which reflects positively in an individual's life. Digital awareness supports active learning, self-evaluation, and self-learning among students. It also includes various playful and activity-based learning methods that help in managing stress and reducing academic pressure. Along with skills and growth, it also helps individuals understand their culture, traditions, and values, thereby developing a proper mind-set for the future.

Educational Implications:

- Holistic development helps in analyzing and applying philosophical ideas into practical teaching-learning processes.

- It promotes an educational approach that integrates humanistic and spiritual values, focusing on the overall development of students.
- It encourages the integration of progressive and democratic ideas in education, supporting inclusive and student-centred learning.
- It emphasizes the role of teachers as facilitators who guide students not only academically but also in their emotional and value-based development.
- It supports the development of students as active learners, helping them grow intellectually, emotionally, and socially.
- It promotes a learning environment where different aspects such as mind, body, and values are interconnected and developed together.

Challenges in Implementing Holistic Education:

- Lack of proper training and awareness among teachers regarding holistic education and its implementation.
- Absence of clear understanding of new teaching methods and evaluation/grading system based on holistic development.
- Continuous pressure of academic marks and exams, which still dominates the education system.
- Large classroom sizes, making it difficult for teachers to give individual attention to each student's overall development.
- Limited resources and facilities, such as sports equipment, creative tools, and activity-based learning materials.
- Unequal access to technology between urban and rural areas, affecting equal learning opportunities.
- Traditional mind-set of parents and schools who still focus mainly on percentage and academic results.
- Difficulty in balancing academic studies with co-curricular and skill-based activities.
- Resistance to change from traditional teaching methods to modern, student-centred holistic approaches.

Over-all Perspective:

- According to the National Education Policy 2020, holistic development has gained importance, focusing on the overall development of students.
- Holistic education promotes the development of skills, knowledge, critical thinking, creativity, and innovative thinking among students.
- Students experience activity-based learning, which helps in inculcating values.
- Holistic development emphasizes that all aspects such as mind, body, spirit, and values are interconnected.

Conclusion:

Therefore, holistic development is not a new concept; it has its roots in earlier educational traditions such as the Gurukul system. Many great thinkers like Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, John Dewey, and John P. Miller have contributed to this idea. These educators emphasized student-centred learning and the overall development of learners.



In the present time, this concept has gained greater importance and is being implemented more effectively in education. Holistic education is a need in today's world, as it plays a key role in preparing students for a bright future. It helps in inculcating good values among students and not only builds a successful career but also shapes them into responsible and good human beings.

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