

The highest function of education is to bring about an integrated individual who is capable of dealing with life as a whole.

J. Krishnamurti

## INTRODUCTION

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.

Current medical education status worldwide – In Canada 40 medical schools were surveyed regarding the state of effective medical educations the observations <sup>1</sup> were as Table 1.

Problems of Medical Educations in India- While the graduates generally possess reasonably sound knowledge of medical science, they are often found deficient in the performance of clinical skills and problem-solving which form the core of clinical competence <sup>2</sup>. There is growing level of mistrust among the public for the medical profession as one hears of cases of negligence, misconduct, and unethical practices leading to legal suits. There is increasing public demand for the accountability, transparency and quality assurance among the health professionals. While the commercialisation of medical profession is cited as a common reason for the dilution of quality, doubts have been raised regarding the quality of training. Are the graduate doctors well trained to perform their clinical responsibilities? Are they aware of their ethical, moral and legal responsibilities?

Why is Holistic Education Important? When it comes to rethinking our current educational system, a holistic

education offers an exciting alternative. In the past decades our knowledge regarding childhood development has expanded, and with it our teaching methodologies. Today, parents and educators alike want more from their learners' education. They are looking for an approach to education that is in tune with each child's unique needs and skills, and one that prepares the child to become a well-rounded adult. As such, holistic education is based on the idea that learners can be taught in a more natural and engaging way. Rather than compartmentalizing school subjects, the holistic approach seeks to empower learners to use their academic learning as a foothold for their professional, emotional and social development.

## THE BENEFITS OF A HOLISTIC APPROACH-

Education is no longer just about learning tangible and measurable skills. Our past educational paradigms relied on the "average" measurements and standardization. Learners were prepared to memorize information and then take placement examinations. Not only is this approach not successful for learners, it may also not be psychologically healthy for some students, according to research done by Sir Ken Robinson.

Although learners should be prepped in core subjects such as mathematics, literature, or science, it is also important that they be taught how to learn. Holistic education redefines not only what a core subject is, it also redefines how learners should be taught. The biggest benefit of a holistic approach isn't just about mental development, but it encompasses psychological, social, emotional growth and as whole an asset for community. A holistic approach motivates learners to learn about a subject. It instils curiosity and allows learners to learn naturally

Table 1: Observation by learners in survey
Teachers responded to raised hands, replied direct questions and allowed critical students to have their say. Seldom did they digress from their predetermined path as a consequence of students comments
All 40 instructors did allow some student questions .None, however, checked to determine if the material was effectively understood.
At no time did a teacher try to have students identify in detail their understanding in a given area, from which they might have built and expanded.
None of the 40 observed teacher was constructively critical of their students' reasoning or conclusion

Table 2: Comparison between Memorization & Holistic Learning	
Rote Memorization	Holistic Learning
Organizes Ideas into Boxes	Organized Ideas into Webs
Keeps Subjects and Concepts Distinct	Interrelates Subjects and Concepts
Few Neural Paths to the Same Idea	Many Neural Paths to the Same Idea
Views Concepts Through One Perspective	Views Concepts Through Many Unique Perspectives and Senses
Aims to Learn Through Repetition	Aims to Learn by Relating

**Table 3: Advantages of Holistic Approach**

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.”

and creatively. It is also attuned to each child’s individual persona and learning style, in contrast of the current mass educational system (Table 2).

**Positive and Long Term Results:** The result is a learner who develops better communication and social skills, and better confidence. They feel good about learning and challenging themselves with certain subjects because these things offer positive associations. Intrinsic motivation, in turn, propels them to be curious, inquisitive, and eventually be innovative adults in the workplace (Table 3).

**Implementing a Successful Holistic Approach:** A holistic methodology seeks to help learners develop all their skills and to build their strengths. As such, this educational approach is inclined towards play-based learning, learners’ creativity, and their imagination. For instance, a holistic curriculum could include dance and stage performance, speech, photography, or painting (to name only a few) in addition to the “traditional” subjects which answers writing only way of expression.

More importantly, a holistic approach would encourage learners to make connections between subjects—for instance, using their creative skills to solve a practical clinical or medico-social problem, or approaching a foreign language similar to the way they approach a mathematical equation.

This kind of teaching does not confine to the classroom setting. In fact, parents and educators would do well to create environments where learners can experiment and explore.

**Education That Is Fun And Meaningful:** Whether it’s allowing a learner to be an involved citizen after school or enrolling him or her in a extra-curricular classes such as stage speaking and reading class—the objective of holistic education is to make learning so fun and meaningful that the child seeks it even when he is out of the classroom and this continues to fuel his quest for lifelong learning and development.

Scholar Base adopts a holistic learning approach and this has successfully helped development of hundreds of learners into well-rounded and successful graduates and professionals serving the society.

**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:

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?

### **PROMOTES UNIVERSALISATION THAN COMPARTMENTALISATION**

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.

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 learners), 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 as well as communities, 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.

Parents worry about the negative social influence they see affecting their learners. Parents see themselves having less impact on their learners’ behavior, relationships, and attitudes. As a result learners’ senses of themselves and self-images are under pressure. This pressure is expressed in:

- Increased competitiveness in many aspects of a learner’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 learners. Parents saw their learners as infants eager to learn, and this eagerness dissipated as these same learners’ monotonous curriculum increased. Learning becomes a necessary chore, driven by rewards and punishments, and too often devoid of direct meaning in their learners’ lives.

Perils of learning in isolation 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?”. Parents see the need for their learners 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 learners that they feel is not currently met.

### WHAT DO LEARNERS NEED TO LEARN?

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

Learners also need to learn about relationships. Relationships are the greatest source of human happiness and misery, yet most learners 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 learners’ learning have little to no time nor resources given to helping learners learn how to have healthy, productive relationships.

### HELPING LEARNERS LEARN WHAT THEY NEED TO LEARN<sup>5</sup>

One of the tools that holistic education uses to help learners learn what they need to learn is ‘meaningfulness’. People of all ages find it difficult to learn things which are not meaningful to them, and conversely, they find that it requires much less effort to learn things that are meaningful. This means that a holistic school will respect and work with the meaning structures that a child comes with rather than begin from a perspective of what “should” be meaningful to a child. Events and dynamics (fear, conflict, friendships, etc.) are part of every child’s life and they are interested in these things. These can be the starting point for learning any of the academic skills that every child needs to master.

Another tool that holistic education uses to help learners learn is flexible pacing. Not all learners learn at the same speed, and no child learns at the same speed all the time. Learning is an inherently creative act, and it requires a system that can move with the individual meaning making of each child. When lessons are too slow, a child

gets bored, and when it is too fast, the child gets lost and then loses interest in the subject. If learners are seen and treated as individuals, there is no need to have groups move at some arbitrarily determined learning pace.

### WHAT ABOUT OTHER PRESSING ISSUES?

Unfounded Notions by Teachers as well as community- Many people today feel that there are concerns which are so pressing that these concerns must be solved before any others (like developing alternative forms of education) are addressed. Such people will say that one cannot discuss philosophy with someone starving - feed the person first, and then one can give time and energy to philosophy.

Holistic education has seen the situation a bit differently, and thinks this metaphor is inadequate. Let us assume that a person is starving unnecessarily because that person has some fundamentally mistaken notions. Perhaps one needs to feed the person initially, but no amount of just feeding the person will help; simply giving them food will only mean they end up starving again later. Holistic education has long maintained that mis-education or inadequate education lies at the roots of our modern problems, and a different kind of education has a real chance of solving them.

Issue of Sustained effort by teaching community – It is a long process in which a collaborative efforts by teaching community is needed. The understanding about a learner, its need, capability and tailor made participative lessons, requires a higher teacher students ratio. Now, the whole curriculum is based upon passing on the information, to the level of affective only cognitive domain. The accumulation of resources for effective a reproducible and socially translatable knowledge in learners is a big exercise.

Slow and initially immeasurable outcome- There is an unfounded notion by community and learners that the short term goals of learning cannot be timely measured. Such as subject wise knowledge cannot be tested and learners cannot be effectively certified in a particular subject or skills. The total development can be assessed after a long time.

### CHALLENGES AND ISSUES IN MEDICAL EDUCATION IN INDIA

The Indian medical education system, one of the largest in the world, produces many physicians who emigrate to the United States, the United Kingdom, and several other countries. The quality of these physicians, therefore, has a broad global impact. Medical schools in India have rapidly proliferated in the past 25 years, doubling since 1980 for a current total of 258. Accreditation by the Medical Council of India (MCI) emphasizes documentation of infrastructure and resources and does not include self-study. The number of schools is determined by each state; the allocation of income-generating “payment seats” in private medical schools, coupled with the high emigration, may be motivating the increase in physician production. Student selection is almost exclusively based

**Table 4: Advantages of Problem Based Learning**

Student centered
Generic competencies
Integration
Motivation
“Deep” learning
Constructivist approach

on performance on an entrance examination, with a lower cut off score for underrepresented minorities.

Curriculum reforms- Curriculum reform has been advocated for over 30 years, with calls for greater relevance of the curriculum to the needs of the community. Revised guidelines from the MCI in 1997 supported these changes.

Introduction of problem based learning and inclusion of situation based questions- Many universities have started problem based integrated teaching. It promotes the better learning. Only two universities have started situation based long questions in final year examinations. The situation based Multiple choice questions are sparingly asked in competitive examinations.

Internship Most Neglected Aspect- The internship year (the fifth year, focusing on rotating clinical experiences), under the aegis of medical schools in India, has suffered from lack of supervision and minimal assessment; it is often used predominantly as a time to study for residency entrance examinations. The college based knowledge and skill need to be integrated but lack of supervision and peer pressure of early enrolling for post graduation is a sad

scenario. There should be a mandatory provision of one year working as medical officer can solve this problem.

Way Ahead- There is well established fact that world over medical education has gone sea changed. It no more requires a teacher centric instructional model. The holistic teaching in the medical curriculum is must. The knowledge, skill and attitude all are equally expected from the doctor by community. Besides a good cut off in basic sciences and a success in competitive exams, assessment of resilience, empathy, true willingness of hard work and ethical values must be assessed. The holistic education is tried with success in some reputed medical schools. But on national level thinking need to be developed to be adopted and implemented.

## REFERENCES

1. *Canadian Med Association Journal* 1964; 90.
2. Roland, C. G. *Canad Med Ass J* 1964; 90:887.
3. Blakenhorn.M A.;Graduate training in Internal Medicine in a Municipal Hospital. *Journal of American Medical Colleges* 1940; 15:153.
4. Challenges and issues in medical education in India.Supe A', Burdick WP. *Acad Med* 2006; 81:1076-80.
5. Schiro, M.S. (2008).*Curriculum theory: Conflicting visions and enduring concerns*. Thousand Oaks, CA:Sage Publications.
6. Hare, JR. "Towards an Understanding of Holistic Education in the Middle Years of Education". *Journal of Research in Education* 2006; 5:301-22.
7. UNESCO. 1996. *Learning: The Treasure Within*. The Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty First Century chaired by Jacques Delors. Paris. UNESCO.Pages-77.