

## Holistic Education

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### Abstract

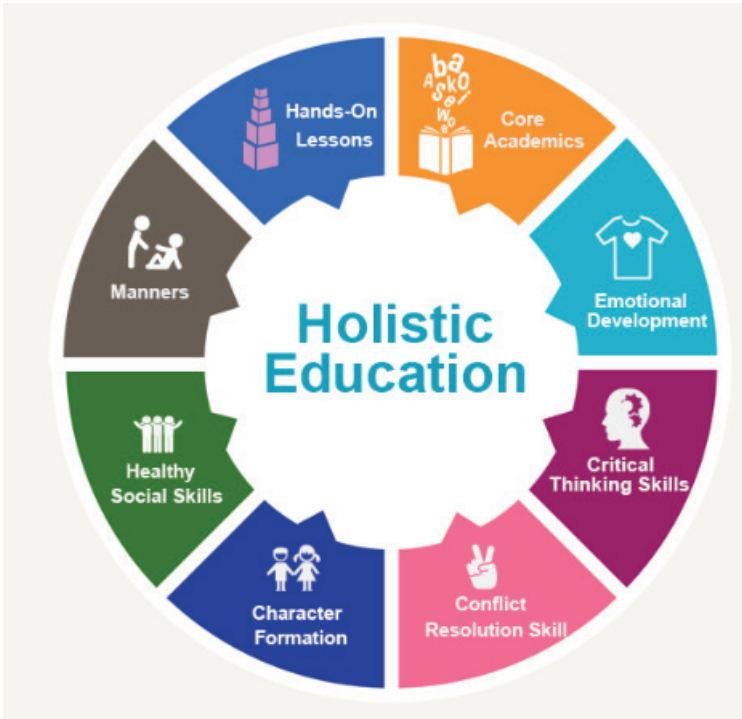
The holistic approach emphasizes the development of active relationships at all levels. This relationship can be between individuals, between peer groups or between the individual and society. Recent research on holistic education and learning shows that the holistic approach has begun beginning to be emphasized. The holistic approach is usually focused on values education and management. The holistic approach entered the literature in the 1980s when Canadian scholar John P. Miller published “The holistic curriculum”. It can therefore be concluded that the holistic approach is based on the fact that the knowledge and skills to be acquired are related to others in the integrity of life, both in terms of content and design, and that the individual perceives the whole earlier and more easily.

### Introduction

Human beings are thinking, feeling and intuitive beings. Students are individuals who need to be educated intellectually, emotionally, socially, psychologically, physically, morally and spiritually (Johnson, 2009). According to the holistic perspective, the individual should be educated in all aspects and should be seen as a whole. An educational approach that focuses only on academic achievement and standardized tests cannot ensure the holistic development of the individual (Forbes, 2003).

The holistic approach emphasizes the development of active relationships at all levels. This relationship can be between individuals, between peer groups or between the individual and society (Miller, 1991). Robin Ann Martin (2003) describes holistic education: *“At its most general level, what distinguishes holistic education from other forms of education are its aims, its attention to experiential learning and the significance it gives to primary human relationships and values in the learning environment.”*

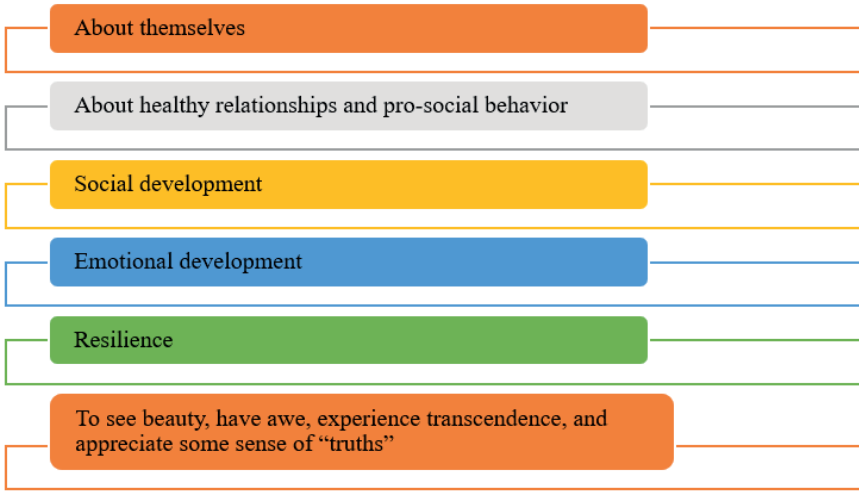
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Hare (2010) draws attention to both cognitive and affective development of students in holistic education approach. The aim of holistic education is to prepare students for a fulfilling and productive life in which they can continuously improve their skills and qualities (Mahmoudi, Jafari, Nasrabadi & Liaghatdar, 2012).

Holistic education believes it is important for young people to learn:



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### The Importance of Holism in Education

In order for living things to survive, they need to adapt successfully to the changes in their environment. Effective adaptation can only be possible through learning. From the beginning of their lives, people are constantly learning something. Today, a lot of scientific research is being done to increase the permanence of learning. The fact that the concept of learning has gained such a central place in the work of educators has led to a focus on the characteristics of individuals who will realize learning. This has led to a rethinking of ideas and approaches to learning within the framework of deduction and induction. Today, the approaches adopted to the concept of learning are based on individual differences.

These approaches are based on deduction in planning, experiencing and evaluating the learning process. It is known that the emphasis on the whole and deduction of gestalt psychology and holistic approach, especially constructivism, was effective in the process of renewing the curricula in our country (Şimşek, 2008).

Review of the relevant research in education shows that, gestalt psychology was the first to process deduction. Here, it was emphasized that individuals' perception processes of the sensations they receive from the outside world are holistic. In Gestalt psychology, it is argued that the working principles of the mind are holism, parallelism and self-regulation.

According to this approach, perception is a whole. The whole is different and more than the sum of its parts. According to Gestalt psychology, human beings tend to perceive similar substances by dividing them into groups where color, texture, shape, gender and similar features are together.

Two other approaches that emphasize holistic education are constructivism and holistic thinking. The holistic approach deals with the planning, implementation and evaluation of both the content and the acquisition process of knowledge and skills as a whole in order to realize the act of learning. There are two justifications for a holistic approach in the learning process. One of them is related to the nature of knowledge. The other is the thesis that the individual perceives the world holistically. The characteristics of holistic science can be listed as follows:

Recent research on holistic education and learning shows that the holistic approach has begun beginning to be emphasized. The holistic approach is usually focused on values education and management. The holistic approach entered the literature in the 1980s when Canadian scholar John P. Miller published “The holistic curriculum” (1988). Miller aimed to inspire children with creativity, compassion, self-knowledge, social skills and emotional health. Therefore, holistic education means nurturing the whole personality and helping individuals to live more consciously within their communities and natural environments (Şimşek, 2008). Montessori, Steiner, Krishnamurti, Dewey, Ferrer and Neill can be considered within this holistic education with their practical methods and radical theories that challenge basic assumptions about schooling, teaching and learning (Miller, 2005).

Especially in holistic education, which became institutionalized in the 19th and 20th centuries, the educational methods developed and put into practice by the pioneers of the theory and the techniques, tactics and strategies they adopted in this context vary greatly. For example, Montessori proposed a ‘prepared environment’ model that allowed children to learn at their own pace in response to certain sensory and intellectual stimuli, often with specialized materials that they could use independently. Rudolf Steiner designed the Waldorf approach, which his followers described as ‘intuitively insightful, clairvoyant and knowing’, based on an intuitive understanding and grasp of the spiritual need that arises at each stage of personal development.

Therefore, children in Waldorf schools are classified according to their age. They spend most of their time learning new things in group activities that are meticulously prepared and implemented by teachers who have an intuitive grasp of their individual characteristics and immediate needs. As can be seen, whereas Waldorf schools strongly oppose the realization of

literacy, especially in children under the age of seven, and emphasize the development of imagination and artistic expression, Montessori education emphasizes empirical learning by focusing on real objects in the environment and encourages literacy at an early age.

In contrast, some holistic approaches (e.g. Quaker schools or ‘neo-humanist’ education) embrace meditation, periods of quiet reflection and daily life accounting, yoga and other focusing practices. The vanguard of other holistic approaches, such as Reggio Emilia, places great emphasis on artistic expression and creativity. Krishnamurti, on the other hand, advised against such methods. He suggests that a caring, open and non-authoritarian relationship between people can lead to real learning and even to the awakening of a vision that many parents and radical educators who have participated in the ‘unschooling’ or ‘unschooling’ education movements agree on, by establishing collective learning centers in many places instead of rigidly run schools. Given the richness and diversity of methods, techniques and strategies that exist in the holistic education system, it is almost impossible to speak of a school structure that is similar in all its content and equipment. Likewise, one cannot speak of a holistic curriculum that applies to all schools. For these various reasons, despite the observed differences in holistic education, almost every holistic educator has adopted a similar attitude and approach in terms of language, style, concept, subject matter and goal in describing a successful educational life.

By coalescing around the same basic concepts and arguments, they have pioneered the growth and development of a holistic understanding of education and contributed to the formation of a solid and permanent ground for the continuation of the process.

### **Characteristics of Learners according to the Holistic Approach**

Holistic (global) learners see the big picture and pay little attention to the details. They have characteristics such as seeing the whole picture, looking for relationships, cooperation in group work, reading between the lines (capturing the overall meaning), seeing many options, a sense of honesty, multitasking, reading body language, wanting others to be involved.

Holistic learners are sensitive to the feelings of others, flexible, go with the flow, learn through discussion and working with others, seek motivation and support, are open to all criticism, avoid individual competition, avoid conflict, may skip steps and details. They dislike explaining themselves analytically, not knowing the meaning of what they are doing, going step by step without knowing where they are going, not being able to connect what

they have learned, not being rewarded for their efforts, not being sensitive to the feelings of others.

This should be considered the most important reason for meaningful learning. But does everyone have a tendency towards holistic learning? Or is it something that is learned later on? Although developmental psychologists report that the ability to think analytically can be realized from the stage of abstract thinking, we can feel a holistic learning tendency in every period of our lives. In this, of course, it can be said that the style of education given to individuals over time is effective in the formation of their learning styles. Individuals' learning styles are also closely related to the style offered to them.

According to Rita Dunn, the inventor of the learning styles approach; 40 years of research has shown that most children learn holistically (global), tactile and kinesthetic. However, when teachers were analyzed according to the research, it was seen that most of them had an analytical, auditory and sometimes visual approach (Dunn, 2023).

This table reveals a contradiction and the tendency of individuals towards holistic learning despite teachers. This is because children who learn in a tactile, kinesthetic, holistic style cannot be taught new information in a theoretical, analytical way, or it may be difficult to teach. At the end of this process, the child who has difficulties or fails may begin to doubt himself/herself and lose self-confidence. Individuals can only hear what they are told. Besides, it is difficult to prevent them from forgetting in a short time. However, creating a creative learning environment and enabling students to make some gains and inferences based on examples can turn into meaningful learning as it can create a holistic learning opportunity.

## **Conclusion**

It can therefore be concluded that the holistic approach is based on the fact that the knowledge and skills to be acquired are related to others in the integrity of life, both in terms of content and design, and that the individual perceives the whole earlier and more easily.

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