

ABRIDGED EDITION OF



**Holistic
Education**

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Preface

The education systems which had been developing for more than a century aims to nurture children and juveniles with knowledge, ability and working skills in order to live quality lives and become conscious of their roles toward their societies and the world.

Whenever the aim of the learning system is merely “**subject-based learning**” and the development of human’s mind is separate from the acquisition of knowledge, then the education will be off balance. It will become nothing more than the tools of accumulation and pass on knowledge in order to develop technology to justify the consumerist society.

At the beginning of the 21st century, educators around the globe began to notice the situation and realized that another role of education was missing. That was “**life-based learning**”. This form of education will enable the students to comply what they have learnt in the classroom as the mean to find the core meaning of knowledge thus they will learn to appreciate the value of life and the environment. They will rediscover that their potential or “human nature of learning” are broader and deeper than one can imagine. This kind of knowledge will lead them through the crust of this materialistic world and achieve the core meaning of their lives and of the world.

The above concept inspired many educators to keep searching for the alternative way of learning. Around 1970 A.D. the new form of education which is called Holistic Education/Learning was initiated. Many researches and studies on this subject which conducts worldwide indicate that this educational innovation seem to be the form of learning that help solve the question of how to develop mankind to the utmost potential, having the personality of the people in the 21st century and become the valuable population of the society and the world.

The Development of Learning System

The process of “Holistic Learning”

The word “Holistic Learning” may seem to us a new type of education system which was established and developed in the western world by western scholars in the 70’s. However at the present time we can see that the above-mentioned learning system and the learning process to develop mind and intelligence in the eastern world such as mindfulness meditation or contemplative practice are coherent, apart from meditation which most of us know and practice extensively.

Since the year 1950 A.D. many educators and other educational related institutes have tried to develop various forms of educational sessions such as learning psychology, behavioral science and finally brain-based learning. The process to develop the learning system originated from **Gestalt theory** which indicated that vision recognized the whole form and not the part. (This theory was the brainchild of Max Wertheimer, Kurt Koffka, Wolfgang Kohler and Kurt Lewin.) Moreover, Jan Christian Smut had studied intensively in the meaning of education as a whole and gave a definition that “the whole is more than the sum of the part.”

This school of thought contributed to various learning theories such as Bloom’s Taxonomy of learning which caused a tremendous change in the learning system. The goal of education is not only give knowledge but also to elevate humans in every aspect.

The achievement in learning must consist of these three domains; cognitive domain, affective domain and psychomotor domain. The three domains help the educators to evaluate human cognition in all dimensions and to be more systematic. With the understanding of education’s purpose, the educators can arrange a multitude of educational aspects, both in and outside of the classroom, and help their students to achieve their goals individually.

Child-centered Learning / Whole child development

It is noteworthy to mention that the educational motivative models, which conform and is directed at the target of developing human beings to their utmost potential, were created under the challenging circumstances by the non-traditional educators. Dr. Maria Montessori, an Italian doctor, created the learning system for underprivileged children in the low income area. Her purpose was to elevate the children’s devastated mind and restore the “ability of learning” at the same time helping to build their self-esteem and dignity. The other one was the Waldorf school which was founded by an anthroposophy named Rudolf Steiner at the end of World War II. The third one was

Reggio Emilia, a community education model in Italy, initiated by an educator named Loris Malaguzzi. The center which opened for post war children aimed to create the future generation; a generation of people who are eager to acquire knowledge and work with creative thinking. This is the way to build a leading generation in order to help restore the society, they will be taught to face and solve problems and at the same time learn to work as a team.

The above three models indicate that the importance of motivation of the educational transformation as a whole; no matter what is the target, the processes including the measurement and evaluation, come from the intention to elevate the quality of the learners. This process also alters the role of parents and communities. In the educational management, the parents and communities have to participate and support the school to ensure that our target is to develop each child to his ultimate potential, not only learning the subject, which is the real meaning of child-centered learning or whole child development.

This form of education has spread worldwide, both in term of conventional training or adopting ideas and merging with other means of education. In Thailand, there are many schools that employ with this method of education such as Children Village School, Amatayakul School (Neo-humanist). Buddhist schools such as Thawsi School, Siam Sam Tri school, Roong Aroon School and other Buddhist schools under the Ministry of Education including many home schools around the country.

A few years ago, in the Asian-Pacific region the Holistic Education network had been organized by Professor John Miller, a Canadian Scholar. At the round-table conference, those interested in this form of education can exchange and discuss their ideas or present their research. The development of Holistic Learning becomes clearer and has the tendency to expand extensively.

The new phenomenon of education in the 21st Century: Developing the country by developing the people.

In the globalization of the 21st century, we can see the new movement in the education sector, in terms of elevating the quality of education and breaking through the old frame of conventional development in order to develop the country in a quantum leap of growth. The paradigm shift and new mind set are established in the area of economic and education to enhance the quality of the new generation.

The movement happened in 2002 when the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) had organized a PISA (Program of International Student Assessment) test among 15 year old juveniles. The assessment aims to evaluate the learning skill and the ability to solve real life problems as it is indicated under the

topic of 21st Century Learning Skills which divided human learning into three groups as follows:

1. **Learning and Innovation skills:** learning how to learn, critical thinking & problem solving, communication & collaboration, creativity & innovation.
2. **Digital literacy skills:** information literacy, media literacy, ICT literacy.
3. **Career & life skills,** work-ready/prepared for life, flexibility & adaptability, initiative & self-direction, social & cross cultural interaction, productivity & accountability, leadership & responsibility.

The 21st century learning skills has become a new educational indicator. Many countries announced to reform their learning concepts such as the Teach-Less/Learn-More method in Singapore which emphasized on the core value instead of teaching technique. The People Republic of China changed its educational policy from One Nation-One Curriculum to Whole Nation-Different Expertise. Even Finland, which performed par excellence in the PISA test has set its goal as Quality and Equality. These countries have the same reason to set the education reform as their national agendas, that is to elevate the quality of their citizens. They rectified the teaching method from passive learners to active learners and also adjust the management system, from policy makers to officers and from educational management to learning management.

If we look at the target or the educational assessment and the educational management, we will recognize that we have come closer to the way of the holistic learning system, such as:

1. The target of education that emphasizes the quality of life over the curriculum and create awareness of being a social engaged citizenship.
2. The concept of teaching emphasizes the core concept of learning skills instead of memorizing and examination. This concept of teaching encourages students to become active learners.
3. Rectifying the learning method, content and mode of learning from learning by memorizing to learning by doing. Otherwise alter group learning to the form of base learning, integrating various skill and global learning issues under the topic that connects with life, social and environmental impact.

How to establish a Holistic Learning System in school.

Holistic learning can be established in every social context because it is the way of learning in which learners can acquire knowledge by oneself. However, at the beginning the learner needs to practice “learning how to learn” because he has to

understand himself and know what he wants to achieve. This can be trained starting from when he is in kindergarten up until college or lifelong learning and in any group of people (Inclusive Education).

The special characteristic of holistic learning that makes this form of learning differ from the 21st century learning skill is that it emphasizes on learning to develop one's mind and intelligence in order to acquire knowledge from within, having good attitude, awareness and conscious. To gain self-actualization one needs to practice meditation which comes in many forms according to one's age and preference.

However, the main factor that effects the learner directly is the process of teacher training. We must train the teacher to be a sensible person with the right view so he can plan the curriculum that can be integrated into the action plan. He needs to have embedded formative assessment skill and can evaluate the learner individually in order to stimulate the development, attitude, conscience and good behavior in the learner.

To encourage the teacher to gain this skill, the educational institute must endorse the BAR/AAR (Before/After Action Review) and R to R (Routine to Record) processes in its establishment. These programs help the establishment to continuously review and evaluate the classroom, the learner and the teacher. The establishment should include these processes in its objective plan together with knowledge management plan and should consider the same level of importance as teaching time in the class.

The other important factor that helps to support holistic learning is the cooperation among home, religious establishments, communities and educational establishments. The educational establishment can act as a center of this learning community and create various kinds of activities and grow together such as "parent classroom" for young children, religious activities, volunteer to help out the impoverished people or disaster victims and mindfulness meditation with other dhamma retreat.

To establish holistic learning systems there are some important rules as follows:

1. The learner should learn to stay totally with oneself, both in and out of the educational establishment. He should use his conscience as a tool of practicing and stay with his breath at the very moment.
2. The model of practicing in the educational establishment can be divided into two forms:
 - 2.1. Daily routine that had been designed with specific purpose and
 - 2.2. Learning activities that had been designed with the purpose to give the learning opportunity both in context and skill. The learner should practice from when he enters the establishment until he leaves.
3. Objective-Learning-Evaluation (OLE) of the curriculum in each age group and each management level i.e. Classroom in one day, one week, one term and one

school year. They should be arranged accordingly by using Formative Assessment. Beside that, final assessment can be done through exams (Summative Assessment).

4. Learning circle in each unit should be arranged in six levels:
 - 4.1. Inspire the thirst to learn,
 - 4.2. Practice/experiment/observation,
 - 4.3. Exchange knowledge and experience,
 - 4.4. Make a research/teacher add other useful information,
 - 4.5. Take action/experiment with important issue, individually and with a group,
 - 4.6. Evaluate together and make a conclusion.

5. The teacher will observe and evaluate the learning skill, social skill, working ability and ethical behavior of the learner individually and make a record. At this stage, the teacher is very important and should receive very good training. The teacher should have skill and loving kindness to accept the learner's circumstance as it is and without prejudice and has good relationship with the learner, ready to give advice and encourage the learner to alter his conscious thinking.

6. Dynamic development of teaching plan in each course level in school. The teaching plan should comply with the social situation and the changing circumstances. The teaching plan should help the learner to face problems that will effect his development or elevate his learning ability.

Conclusion

Holistic Learning and Holistic Education Management are developing and continue to expand in many regions namely Asia, Pacific, Australia, etc. Due to the necessity to develop people to help in developing our society, we need to change the learning method. Since education can change the quality of mankind thus we need to change our vision and understand the new meaning of education.

In the digital era, education is not limited only in school areas or educational institutes but it can happen to anybody anytime any space. It depends on each person whether he can obtain knowledge and use that knowledge for the benefit of himself and his society. Holistic learning aims to practice learning skills until he can achieve the real value of mankind. Holistic learning will be the means of education in the future when intelligence is not limited with education.

Development of Education in 21st Century

A Big Shift



Chalk & Talk
Content-based Learning
Test score - based Evaluation

Learning by Doing
Competency & Skills-based Learning
Human Core Values
Formative Assessment

Holistic Education System

Main Goals

- Well-Rounded person Development
- Quality Citizen
- Social Contributor / Engaged



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Key Words

1. Holistic Education /Learning innovation
2. Life-based Learning
3. Human nature of Learning
4. Mindfulness meditation
5. Whole child development
6. The educational establishment
7. 21st learning skill
8. Self-actualization
9. Integrated learning activity
10. Learning by Doing
11. Learning by daily life activity
12. Integrated learning activity
13. Teacher Training
14. Parent classroom curriculum
15. Changing quality of people
16. Child-Centered Learning
17. Formative Assessment
18. Social Engaged Citizenship
19. Mankind with utmost potential