



## Commentary

# Towards A Holistic Understanding of Education in the Middle Years of School

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## INTRODUCTION

Holistic education lacks a single definition but may be described through a number of recurrent themes that appear in the literature. These themes have been used to develop underlying values that reflect this educational approach and the behaviours associated with these values are described. A person profile is presented from these values and behaviours and describes the attributes, abilities and competencies of a student who has benefited from holistic education in the middle years of their education. The advantages of the person profile are discussed.

All teachers need to reflect: 'Are we satisfied with our methodology today? How are the students performing? Is it the way I wanted? Do we feel happiness and satisfaction when we think of school and students? Do we want to change anything anywhere? What is it I can do to scale up a performance? Excellence is a word which means doing the right thing and working on it to do better the next time. There should be openness of thought and no rigidity in transaction of curriculum. As seen in 'Diwaswapna' by Gijubai, a system which can be compromised but which does not impact deliverables is always welcome and teachers need to reflect on this despite resistance to change as can be expected, teachers must move with the needs of the time. A curriculum which brings out an awakened citizen has to be created by us. Communication

is the key of creating such a citizen. Today's shift should be on globalism and world peace as that is the order of the day.

## PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

"Nobody plans to fail but failure results from a failure to plan." Planning, articulating and developing, implementing, putting into practice, evaluating, updating the program and determining the success of the program are important. Children should feel that they are valued and their voices are heard. The curriculum structure and school should be designed to make school a satisfactory place for students. Empowering every child to be a self-motivated learner is very important for the success of a good curriculum. Learning without burden to make learning a joyful experience and moving away from textbooks should be a basis for examination to remove stress from children in the lower classes.

## ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

The ages 3 to 6 are called magic years as the pace of growth and development is the fastest and most rapid. If curriculum is not properly planned and child centric, it can kill the talent of the child and make him unable to learn. Development is a continuous process during prenatal period and there should be good synergy between adequate nutrition, physical exercise and other psycho social needs. Participation in yoga and sports is required.

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Participation through child centred, family focussed intervention is very important. The teacher is the nerve centre of the whole education process.

### **IMPORTANCE OF VARIOUS SUBJECTS**

Students respond to music before they learn to speak. Children learn something new by connecting to something older. Musical training affects organizational and anatomical structure of the brain. It has been proven that music is the best stimulus for the brain. It improves environments in the classroom. Practicing music vocally or through instrument in childhood is associated with enhanced verbal ability and nonverbal reasoning. In higher cognitive domains, music holds significant educational promise.

Spoken English is to be given more importance. Teachers must prioritize on literacy and then on spoken English. All students can learn and need to learn Mathematics. In Maths, number sums are to be taught first and then problem sums. Pedagogy and learning environment have to be made favourable to develop interest by going far beyond basic skills and include variety of mathematics models which devotes a greater percentage of instructional time to problem solving and active learning.

Introduction of computers in schools is to move from a predetermined set of outcomes and skill sets to one that enables students to develop explanatory reasoning and other higher-order skills. Students can access sources of knowledge, interpret them, and create knowledge rather than be passive users. The Pedagogy of learning sciences

should be designed to address the aims of learning facts and principles of science and its applications, consistent with the stage of cognitive development, to acquire skills and understand the methods and processes that lead to validation of scientific knowledge, to nurture natural curiosity, aesthetic sense and creativity in science and technology, to imbibe concern for life and preservation of environment and to cultivate 'scientific temper'-objectivity.

### **SOCIAL SCIENCE IS NECESSARY TO ASSIST STUDENTS TO EXPLORE**

their interests and aptitudes, to encourage to explore higher levels of knowledge in different disciplines, to promote problem-solving abilities and creative thinking, to introduce students to different ways of collecting and processing data and information in specific disciplines, and help arrive at conclusions, and to generate new insights and knowledge in the process. The objectives of including art education in schools is to bring about complete development of the student's personality and mental health, to appreciate cultural heritage and develop respect for each other's work and connect to environment.

Health and Physical Education is necessary to provide theoretical and practical inputs, to provide an integrated and holistic understanding of health, disease, accidents and physical fitness among children, to provide skills for dealing with psycho-social issues in the school, home and the community, to help children grow as responsible citizens by inculcating in them certain social and moral values through games, sports, N.C.C., Red Cross, Scouts and Guides, etc