



The Whole Human Being Paradigm and Holistic Curriculum Approach

Faysal Özdaş¹, Burhan Akpınar², Veli Batdı³, Osman Karahan⁴, Bilal Yıldırım⁴

Mardin Artuklu University Department of Educational Science¹, Firat University Department of Educational Science², Cumhuriyet Anatolian High School³, Mustafa Hakkari University, Hakkari⁴ (Turkey)

faysalozdas@hotmail.com, bakpinar@firat.edu.tr, veb_27@hotmail.com, osmankarahan@hu.edu.tr, byildirim@mku.edu.tr

Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the “holistic” curriculum approach based on “the whole human being” paradigm. The study was carried out with documentary analysis method. The data consist of the scientific studies included in the related literature. The results attained through the analysis of the data are as follows: “The whole human being” in holistic education means the sum of an individual’s mind, body, emotions and spirit, which are the subject of education and can be developed. The holistic curriculum approach is the reflection of these four dimensions making up the human being in the curriculum design. Holistic curriculum requires an epistemological balance between subjective and objective information intended towards “information” that is the basic material of the curriculum in educating people. Besides, holistic curriculum also expresses a balance between the individual and society. The final aim of the holistic curriculum, which is designed taking into account “whatever said about human being” varies in accordance with the culture in which this curriculum is implemented. This aim is defined as “reaching transcendence” in Western societies and “transformation of self” in Far East culture. The final aim of the holistic curriculum in Islamic societies, in which it will be balanced somewhere between matter and meaning, can be defined as “reaching the knowledge of Allah” or “to be perfect human being”.

Key Words: Holistic curriculum, Whole human being, Perfect human being, Curriculum development, Interdisciplinary curriculum, Epistemology.

Introduction

Curriculum can be defined in general as the *plan to educate an individual*. Curriculum can mainly be based on two bases as human and information. Hence, the first step in developing a curriculum in education starts with the questions “What is human?” and “What is information?”. This study focused on the “human” phenomenon, which is one of the theoretical bases of curriculum. This human is the whole human, which is the admission of holistic education approach. The “whole human being” accepted as the subject of the curriculum rather than being an object of it is composed of mind, body, emotions and spirit. Holistic curriculum is the reflection of these four dimensions making up human beings into the curriculum. The holistic curriculum, which is based on three main bases as balance, scope and connection (1) and which takes its reference from Humanist philosophy, intends to develop the individual in terms of intellectual, emotional, moral, social, physical, artistic, creative and spiritual dimensions (2).

Method

This study was carried out based on documentary analysis and it employs survey model having a qualitative aspect. This model is the interpretation of the qualitative data collected through document analysis by unifying them in a system (3). The documents, which are the sources of data for this study,



are the scientific works concerned with topics such as holistic education, holistic curriculum and “whole human being”. These works were analysed and interpreted within the context of “whole human being” and “holistic curriculum” and some conclusions were drawn.

Human Assumption and the Curriculum

There is a close relationship between the meaning and scope of the curriculum and the human assumption of it. This assumption affects deeply all the elements of the curriculum, direction being the first. For instance, if the curriculum views human as the subject, it focuses on the process of instruction and it focuses on the result (output) if it views human as the object. Another example is that the curriculum admitting that human mind is empty from birth differs greatly from the one that defends the opposite. The third example, in the conception of the curriculum that educates people for the society and the market, the social roles and tasks are located in the centre while the curriculum seeing the individual as unique focuses on revealing the real potential of the individual. These examples which can be increased further provide adequate ideas to demonstrate that human assumption affect the main direction of the curriculum.

The human assumption of the curriculum determines the direction of the acquisitions in general. The other elements of the curriculum are shaped parallel to this fact. Therefore, the importance of human has come to the fore in developing curriculum models (4). Hence, the process of curriculum development must depart from the philosophies and thoughts about human (5). As a matter of fact, the first step of developing a curriculum starts with the analysis of the phenomenon of human in a number of curriculum development models as well as in that of Tyler and Taba (6).

The Whole Human Being Paradigm

The question “what exactly is human being” occupying the philosophy is also the main focus of curriculum development in education. For the answer of this question, the disciplines such as theology, philosophy and psychology can be referred. However, the answer of the question “what/who is human being?” differs in accordance with the philosophy referred. Therefore, the definitions and models of curricula also differ. In this study, the “whole human being” paradigm, which is the human assumption of holistic education conception, was studied without dealing with these differences.

According to the “whole human being” paradigm, which came into being as a reaction to positivism’s matching the human being only with the mind, human being has four dimensions that are body, mind, heart, and spirit (7). Nakagawa (8) states these dimensions as physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. This unity within the individual can be handled as individual-society and individual-universe apart from the individual. These unities can be broadened further with the contexts of “connection”, “inclusion” and “balance”, which are the major principles of holistic education.

The answer of the question “why whole human being?” is, in a sense, the basic hypothesis of this study. This hypothesis is that the present situation, which was brought about by cognitive-focused mainstream educational approach with the influence of Modernism, Positivism, Pragmatism and Behaviourist Psychology viewing human beings from a materialistic perspective, is not satisfactory. The meaning of neglecting emotions and spirit in education is the deterioration of human’s unity. This deterioration can be defined as dismantling of the mind or a single-sided, insufficient development. This insufficiency reduces the possibility of “seeing the big picture” by restricting the perceiving and thinking ability of human beings. The symptoms of this consideration, which deems cognitive development enough for “human development”, are clearly seen: doctors involved in trade with their knowledge in medicine, engineers using their knowledge and skills to produce a bomb and skilled accountants robbing the government... However, what is mentioned here is that the mainstream educational approach is not totally wrong but it is not comprehensive enough. The deficiency of mainstream education should be supported with other ideas and philosophies. Thus, the “whole human being” paradigm is the search for a balanced “reasonable compromise” by combining the



viable sides of the ideas and philosophies about human rather than paving the way for them to fight each other and eventually favour one. This struggle is, in a sense, facilitates developing a functional curriculum by increasing the possibility of understanding human beings.

Holistic Curriculum

The holistic curriculum, which has been designed on “whole human being” paradigm basis and has integrated holistic attitude into curriculum (Cristina, 2009), has a holistic viewpoint in many ways. This holism not only means the combination of mind, body, emotions and spirit making up the human, the subject of the curriculum, but it also encompasses the epistemological balance between subjective and objective information conceptions. The unity among the five senses transmitting data to the brain can also be added. Besides, the holism of the holistic curriculum can be broadened with different contexts such as material-meaning, instructional process-instructional outcomes and individual-society. The holistic curriculum requiring the multifaceted feeding of the character of the individual (9) can be designed in different ways depending on the nature of different cultures and disciplines. A sample holistic curriculum design is given here (the theoretical basis hasn't been clarified yet) as a suggestion.

The following procedure can be followed in designing holistic curriculum: first of all, the vision and final aim (general aim) of the holistic curriculum should be determined within the axis of “whole human being” paradigm. Next, it should be decided how many basic elements the curriculum will consist of and which of these elements will be given priority. If the holistic curriculum consist of four basic elements (acquisitions, content, activities and testing), these elements can be designed as follows:

Acquisitions: The acquisitions in the holistic curriculum should be integrated in such a way to include the mind, body, emotions and spirit dimensions of human being in line with “whole human being” paradigm. Therefore, the acquisitions should be determined in accordance with the cognitive domain for the mental development of the individual, affective domain for the emotional development and psychomotor domain for the physical (bodily) development of individuals. In the holistic curriculum, it the most difficult task to write the acquisitions to refer to the spirit of the individual. Because the mainstream education has a phobia of metaphysics, it is not familiar with spirituality. So, the least-known dimension by the curriculum developers having this tradition about human beings is the spirit.

Content: The information to be included in holistic curriculum should be holistic in such a way to contain different categories such as subjective information-objective information with respect to epistemology, scientific-unscientific information, mental-intuitive information and verbal information-mental skills (10). In the curriculum, this information should be organised with a holistic perspective keeping a balance between Classical and Romantic conceptions of information (11) and Logical and Psychological organisation conceptions (12). Moreover, in this organisation, it should be taken into account that the content of the curriculum may, in some cases, be a means to reach the aim and sometimes the aim itself (in Constructivist Approach) (13). Similarly, while organising the content of the curriculum, there may be a balance among linear, spiral, modular and core approaches.

Activities (Learning Experiences): The activities in a curriculum are the answer of the question “how should we teach?” (14). The activities in the holistic curriculum should be determined in such a way to unify the internal and external conditions in learning first and experiences allowing a vertical and horizontal development in learning (15). Besides, the activities should be designed in such way to provide the “multiple” interaction of learners with the content of the curriculum. Therefore, the activities should be enriched with the support of various materials so as to address to more than one sense of the individual. The atmosphere, in which the holistic curriculum is implemented, is a multi-sensory atmosphere congruent with constructivist approach.

Testing: The measurement and evaluation activities making up the testing phase in holistic curriculum must, above all, comprise instructional process and outcomes together. The result of the instruction process is focused on in the mainstream education while making measurement and evaluation,



whereas the instructional process is given more importance in contemporary approaches like Constructivism. However, focusing on the result in the instruction process is criticized with making individuals almost ordinary on an average line by damaging the individual differences and originality (16). On the contrary, it is claimed that focusing merely on the instructional process rather than the results makes the curriculum nonsense. Here, the holistic curriculum can make the curriculum more humane and applicable by forming a balance between these two approaches. It is important in holistic curriculum to use the multiple measurement means together since all dimensions of the individual are referred to in the curriculum.

Conclusion

It is clear that it is not possible to develop the individual in all dimensions with mainstream education focused on merely cognitive development by ignoring emotions and spirit. This case is not acceptable for human being, who has a limitless learning potential. So, pedagogues have long sought an alternative curriculum that can develop the individual in all dimensions. At this point, holistic education and holistic curriculum has come to the fore as a serious alternative.

Holistic education, which reflects the synthesis of all ideas and thoughts on human beings and is based on material-meaning balance, aims at developing the individual with all his/her dimensions as mind, body, emotions and spirit. The final aim of holistic education is expressed as “reaching transcendence” in Western culture and “transformation of self” in Far East culture. This final aim of holistic education can be adapted as “reaching the knowledge of Allah” or “to be perfect human being”. What is mentioned with the phrase “reaching the knowledge of Allah” here is human beings’ understanding thoroughly the cosmos, which is the reflection of the creator. The aim “being the perfect human being” points to a human who has reached self-control by ensuring his/her inner unity, found his/her meaning in life and is “self-realized”. İbrahim Hakkı’s intention to educate the “*perfect human being*” for the sake of the knowledge of Allah with an education based on the balance between mental and transferred information and material and meaning (Akpınar et al., 2013) and the holistic human conception of Mevlana (Ergül, 2011) can guide the implementation of holistic education in Islamic culture.

The curriculum approach of the holistic education is holistic curriculum. There are different holistic curriculum conceptions. A holistic curriculum design is given in this study as a suggestion. Thus, holistic curriculum should be designed in such a way to ensure the development of mind, body, emotions and spirit dimensions of the individual together. Such a program having a unity in itself is expected to be designed in such a way to include balances such as individual-society, individual-cosmos, subjective information-objective information conceptions, mind-intuition, instruction process-instruction outcome, traditional measurement means-alternative measurement means and theory-practice (Orion, 2007). The holistic curriculum designed in this way can be expected to reveal individual’s potential more by ensuring a more balanced development of individual in implementation, broaden the perception domain and deepen the limits of thought.

References

- [1] Miller, J. P. (1993). The holistic curriculum. Toronto: OISE Press. from rodclarken.files.wordpress.com/.../wholistic-ed
- [2] Schemmann, M. (2008) The Holistic Curriculum in Higher Education. *Annual Scientific Conference Abai Almaty State University*, 30th April 2008.
- [3] Yıldırım, A. ve Şimşek, H. (2006). *Sosyal bilimlerde nitel araştırma yöntemleri*. Ankara: Seçkin Yayıncılık. Karasar, N. (2005). *Bilimsel araştırma yöntemi*. Ankara: Nobel Yayın Dağıtım. Seyidođlu, H. (1997). *Bilimsel araştırma ve yazma el kitabı*. İstanbul: Güzem Yayınları.
- [4] Karakaya, Ş. (2001). *Eđitim’de program geliştirme çalışmalarını*, Erzurum: Atatürk Üniversitesi Yayınları: No: 917.



3rd Edition

- [5] Ertürk, S. (1979). *Eğitimde program geliştirme*. Ankara: Meteksan.
- [6] Akpınar, B. (2013). *Eğitimde program geliştirme*. Elazığ: Data Yayınları. Sönmez, V. (2008). *Program geliştirmede öğretmen el kitabı*. Ankara: Anı Yayıncılık. Demirel, Ö. (1999). *Kuramdan uygulamaya eğitimde program geliştirme*. Ankara: Pegem A Yayınları. Büyükkaragöz, S. (1997). *Program Geliştirme-kaynak ve metinler*. Konya: Kuzucular Ofset (2. Baskı). Varış, F. (1996). *Eğitimde program geliştirme teori-teknikler*. Ankara: Alkım Yayınları. Fidan, N. (1996). *Okulda öğrenme ve öğretme*. Ankara: Alkım Yayınevi
- [7] Covey, S. R. (2005). *8'inci alışkanlık- bütünlüğe doğru* (Çev: S. Soner ve Ç. Erendağ) İstanbul: Sistem Yayıncılık
- [8] Nakagawa, Y. (2000). Education for awakening: An Eastern approach to holistic education. Volume Two of the Foundations of Holistic Education Series. Brandon, VT: Foundation for Educational
- [9] Gültekin, M., Merç, A. ve Cığerci, F. M. (2012). Holistik (Bütüncül) Eğitimin İlköğretim Programlarına Yansımaları. *II. Ulusal Eğitim Programları ve Öğretim Kongresi*. 27-28-29 Eylül 2012 Abant İzzet Baysal Üniversitesi, Bolu.
- [10] Senemoğlu, N. (2007). *Gelişim, öğrenme ve öğretim-kuramdan uygulamaya*. Ankara: Gönül Yayıncılık.
- [11] Karakaya, Ş. (2001). *Eğitim'de program geliştirme çalışmaları*, Erzurum: Atatürk Üniversitesi Yayınları: No: 917.
- [12] Küçükahmet, L. (1998). *Öğretim ilke ve yöntemleri*. Ankara: Alkım Yayınları.
- [13] Fer, Seval ve Cırık, İlker (2007). *Yapılandırmacı öğrenme-kuramdan uygulamaya*. İstanbul: Morpa Yayınları.
- [14] Erden, M. (1998). *Öğretmenlik mesleğine giriş*. İstanbul: Alkım Yayınları.
- [15] Büyükkaragöz, S. (1997). *Program Geliştirme-kaynak ve metinler*. Konya: Kuzucular Ofset (2. Baskı).
- [16] Hesapçoğlu, M. (1994). *Öğretim ilke ve yöntemleri*. İstanbul: Beta Basım Yayım Dağıtım.