



Educating Balance in an Accelerating World

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Abstract

As the technological speed of modern society increases at exponential rates, so has the experience of early childhood been radically altered. Children are faced with increased levels of cognitive stimulation and complexity from their early years. The statistics of the incidence of childhood mental health disorders, such as autism and ADHD, are rising. As the very landscape of childhood has shifted so dramatically since parents and teachers were themselves children, and is increasingly characterized by continuous change rather than by stability, in what ways must educational approaches adapt to help children to successfully integrate these experiences and reach their full human potential? Is cognitive development in itself sufficient to guarantee happiness, or does conscious attention need to be given to the development of social, emotional and spiritual competencies? How to facilitate the development of an internal “compass” to prepare children to navigate the challenges of a technological, commercialized culture?

This paper explores these questions according to the holistic approach to early childhood development offered by Neohumanist Education. It examines the ways that Neohumanist education balances extroversial sensorial stimulation and cognitive development, with training in introversial capacities such as self-regulation, empathy and creative visualization. The Neohumanist teacher's own subjective experience and self-development is seen as an inseparable part of the teaching process. The paper studies Neohumanist Education's synthesis of classical eastern wisdom teachings from the ancient tradition of yoga that highlight personal development and collective values with modern western progressive educational techniques that cultivate rationality, logic and individual creative expression. The holistic vision of Neohumanist education is essentially an ecological vision that honors the interconnectedness of the web of life, seeking to preserve children's sense of being connected to a greater whole, engage them in learning as joyful discovery, and help them discover meaningful ways to contribute to their world.