

LANGUAGE, CULTURE, COMMUNICATION

HOLISTIC AND ALTERNATIVE PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES IN THE MODERN EDUCATION SYSTEM

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Summary

The article examines the global changes taking place in the education system in modern times and the holistic education concept formed against the background of these changes. The study analyzes the challenges of the 21st century – digitalization, globalization, technological development, environmental problems and the transformation of the traditional education model in the context of the emergence of human capital. It is especially emphasized that the holistic education approach considers the intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual development of a person within a single system. The article comparatively analyzes the main principles, development theories and the teacher factor of alternative pedagogical models such as Waldorf and Montessori, and refers to the theoretical views of educators such as Rudolf Steiner, Maria Montessori, Lev Vygotsky, Carl Rogers and John Dewey. At the same time, global problems of modern education – issues such as digital inequality, adaptation to the labor market, emotional well-being, inclusion and teacher shortage – are examined, and ways to solve them are identified. As a result of the study, it was determined that the modern education system should be formed not only as a mechanism for transmitting knowledge, but also as a humanistic and flexible model that ensures the comprehensive development of the personality.

Key words: holistic education, alternative pedagogy, Waldorf school, Montessori education, modern education, 21st century skills, personality-oriented education.

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1. Introduction

In our world, which has shrunk considerably with the development of science and technology, all states, regardless of their level of development and political position, have been forced to act together in a number of important directions. The use of technology, waste resulting

from global warming, environmental protection against possible nuclear wars, clean energy production, etc. have become common goals of the states of the world. On the other hand, due to the rapid development of communication technologies, there is a desire to “share information” and “get information quickly”. These desires and tendencies will take a firm place in the educational philosophies of states and the ideals of humanity as both defense mechanisms of humanity and lifestyles in the coming decades. However, cultural differences and their reflection in educational concepts and practices will continue to exist in tolerance. For this reason, the general trends in education adopted by all countries will be based on unity in diversity (living in a common and unified world). Thus, no matter how general and global the problem of education in the new world is, the development strategy should be determined according to the character of the nation, and small nuances should not be overlooked.

Holistic education and alternative pedagogical approaches are one of the widely studied directions in world pedagogical thought. Rudolf Steiner’s Waldorf pedagogy, Maria Montessori’s development-oriented education system, John Dewey’s pragmatic pedagogy, Lev Vygotsky’s theory of socio-cultural development and Carl Rogers’ humanistic concept of education have created important theoretical foundations in this area. Foreign researchers have characterized holistic education as a personality-oriented, creative and socially integrative approach. In the modern era, against the background of digitalization and global challenges, the holistic education model has regained relevance.

Purpose and objectives of the study. The main purpose of the article is to examine the essence of the holistic education concept, the characteristics of alternative school models and the role of these approaches in solving modern educational problems against the background of the challenges of the modern world.

Methods. The article uses analysis, comparative analysis, historical-pedagogical and systematic approaches to investigate the concept of holistic education and alternative pedagogical approaches, and the results obtained are scientifically systematized based on the generalization method.

2. The main part

The concept of holistic education and the demands of the modern world

Education is the most important strategic area of the state and is organically linked to the development of society. What is happening in the world shows that in order to keep up with technological processes and not lag behind the rapid development of the times, radical changes are needed in many areas. In our opinion, the most important of these areas is education. As a process of assimilation of various knowledge, the renewal of education in terms of both structure and content is of great importance in the development of the younger generation and its active integration into international processes.

In the modern world, there are various forms of education in terms of content and form. From time to time, these alternative directions that oppose traditional education become more popular and expedient. One of such alternative models is holistic education. The most important factor in education is quality. Quality education should aim to educate the learner at the highest level, both academically, socially and physically. Because a person is a being consisting of mind, body and emotions. It is from this perspective that some experts believe that the most appropriate approach to human nature is the direction of “holistic education”.

Our lifestyle, which was formed as a result of the industrial revolution, as we mentioned above, has created the need to cope with climate and environmental problems such as global

climate change, plastic pollution, etc., which threaten to destroy the future of the world. Naturally, a large part of the solution to such problems is the task of our modern youth. In this regard, the modern education system must foresee what awaits the world in the near future and be built accordingly.

In this era, where concepts such as artificial intelligence and space travel are relevant, the concept of industry is changing and industry 4.0, where fields such as the Internet of Things, big data, robotics, biomimicry and biogenetics come to the fore, is rapidly developing.

In the new era, the main qualities that distinguish us from robots, such as affective/emotional aspects, empathy, human sensitivities. The development of competencies such as critical thinking and creativity and problem-solving skills has become more important than the habit of following instructions. Creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem-solving, communication and collaboration; literacy in the field of media, information and communication technologies; 21st century skills, summarized as flexibility and adaptability, entrepreneurship and self-management, social and intercultural skills, productivity, responsibility and leadership skills and competencies, are now one of the most important areas of testing and questioning for educational institutions that aspire to prepare learners for the future.

On the other hand, good education and education should equip the students with human values. This requires a learning environment where teachers are equipped with similar values and serve as good role models for children and young people. In the new century, students will no longer have a narcissistic, selfish personality structure, but will instead have faith, compassion and mercy; The greatest need for the individual is to have a set of active ethical values of cooperation, love, sharing, initiative and active.

It is obvious how the “age of reason” that we have witnessed in the last two centuries has led the world to disasters by ignoring the human spirit, the desire for eternity, which is the greatest need of that spirit, and the truth of the afterlife, and that our children will face the permanent scars of this both now and in the future.

In such a case, humanity needs a true “revolution of compassion”. Good education should contain the seeds that will make such a revolution possible. More precisely, good education should be able to convey to children that life, the world, the universe are entrusted to us; It should be able to teach how to use those trusts with caution, courtesy, and compassion, and love, understanding, friendship, and brotherhood should be brought to the forefront in society. It should prepare children for the future of this world as well as the future in the “other world” that awaits them once the door of this world closes. Parents looking for a good school should consider all these factors when making a decision.

Alternative school models in a holistic education system

Recently, as a result of the changes taking place in the modern education system, private schools that meet the requirements of the new era have begun to form. Among these institutions, educational models that are based on R&D-based activities and apply the concept of a “whole education system” are especially distinguished. In this approach, the educational process is perceived not only as the transfer of knowledge, but as a complex system that ensures the comprehensive development of the student’s personality from an intellectual, emotional, social and creative perspective. Based on this view, the holistic education philosophy also evaluates a person as an indivisible whole and defines the goal of education as the development of this wholeness.

In this context, the educational process is built on student-centered principles and is based on the active participation of the child. The student is no longer a passive recipient of information, but acts as an active subject of the learning process. According to Maria Montessori, “The environment must be rich in motives which lend interest to activity and invite the

child to conduct his own experiences" (Montessori, 1949: 92). This approach shows that the educational environment is the main factor shaping the child's learning behavior and changes the role of the teacher, bringing him into a guiding and supporting function.

The role of the teacher in the new pedagogical system is also clearly expressed in the approach of Rudolf Steiner. He notes that "The task of education is to bring the child into relationship with life" (Steiner, 1996: 15). This idea, emphasizing the direct connection of education with life, highlights the importance of integrating learning with real experience and life processes. Thus, the teacher becomes a pedagogical guide who creates conditions for the development of the student rather than a central figure who transmits knowledge.

In alternative school models, educational activities are carried out through broad and integrative programs covering various areas. Dramatic art, culinary, design and other creative workshops develop students' individual interests and abilities, as well as their cooperation, communication and social skills. These activities provide students with not only theoretical knowledge, but also practical life skills and create conditions for their formation as creative personalities.

The integration of technological development into education is one of the important components of this model. Through computer science, STEM and engineering-oriented lessons, students develop algorithmic thinking, problem-solving and analytical skills. The introduction of coding from the early stages increases students' technological literacy and prepares them for the digital society of the future. At the same time, modern education is not limited to academic and technological skills, but also aims to develop critical and reflective thinking skills. Philosophical teaching approaches applied to this end strengthen students' questioning, analysis and evaluation skills. This approach turns them from consumers of information into active subjects who produce knowledge.

The development of language skills also occupies a special place in this system. By working with original and artistic texts in native language and foreign language lessons, students master the expressive capabilities of the language, as well as develop critical reading and writing skills. Foreign language teaching, implemented from an early age, strengthens their intercultural communication skills and creates conditions for global integration.

Art and aesthetic education are also an integral part of this educational model. Music, visual arts and theater activities develop students' aesthetic sense and form their emotional-intellectual balance. At the same time, sports activities, along with physical development, serve to form discipline, teamwork and a healthy lifestyle.

The theoretical foundations of these approaches are closely related to Rudolf Steiner's Waldorf pedagogy and Maria Montessori's educational concept. According to Steiner, the main goal of education is to bring the child into a deep connection with life, while Montessori emphasizes that the learning environment and the active role of the student are decisive in the learning process. Unlike traditional pedagogy, these systems emphasize the natural development of the child, internal motivation and individual potential.

The philosophical essence of this approach is further strengthened by the thought of Swami Vivekananda: "Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man" (Swami, 1963: 358). According to this view, education is the process of revealing the potential that exists within a person.

Consequently, alternative school models based on a holistic educational approach act as a complex pedagogical system that ensures not only academic knowledge, but also the multidimensional development of personality in accordance with the requirements of the modern era, and elevates education to the level of a dynamic process integrated with life.

Developmental theory and the teacher factor in holistic education models

One of the frequent elements of the new pedagogy is its own theory of development: what stages children go through and with what characteristics. Unfortunately, this was not without free interpretations and biased assessments. The underdevelopment of developmental psychology, combined with poor methodology, led to the fact that each such theory (including the Steiner and Montessori theories) contained both accurate observations and false generalizations. For example, the stages of development proposed by Rudolf Steiner were rigidly modeled on the basis of seven-year periods. This division is only partially associated with certain biological indicators – the change of milk teeth at about the age of seven and the observation of hormonal changes at the age of fourteen. However, it is likely that the mentioned classification is more related to the symbolic and sacred meaning given to the number seven in the European theosophical tradition to which Steiner belonged than to scientific grounds.

In the concept of development proposed by Maria Montessori, two three-year periods are distinguished within the six-year stages. These periods are conventionally associated with the intensive development of abilities, on the one hand, and the processes of assimilation, processing and comprehension of the acquired experience, on the other. The mentioned phasing is mainly based on Montessori's personal pedagogical observations and experiences, but the issues of its scientific substantiation and objectivity have become the subject of certain critical approaches in pedagogical research.

However, unlike the Waldorf school, the Montessori system also assumes individual differences in the pace of development. Despite all this, both systems have their weaknesses. Thus, a number of issues are not explained at all. In particular, the concept put forward in individual approaches contradicts the observations of psychoanalysis. "Why does individual development manifest itself so differently, what factors affect developmental delay?" etc. The answers to such questions are fragmentary in nature, there is no systematic approach.

Another cornerstone is the solution of the question of the role of the teacher. Steiner solved this issue in a traditional way, inspired by the example of spiritual mentors. In his opinion, the teacher should be an unconditional authority for the student, a person who not only teaches, but also inspires, a friend, an example. The Austrian educator noted that "the purpose of education is not just to provide the child with knowledge, but to reveal his inner potential" (Steiner, 1996: 30). The most important thing for the Waldorf teacher is to captivate the child with the material, as well as the ability to reveal his talents.

Interest, creativity and active cognitive activity are important factors in the comprehensive development of the personality. These components create conditions for the formation of the child's intellectual, emotional and social potential in the process of interaction and activity. This approach is consistent with Lev Vygotsky's theory of socio-cultural development. According to Vygotsky, a person's mental development takes place in the context of social relations and cooperation: "Through others we become ourselves" (Vygotsky, 1978: 169).

One teacher leads the class until the end: from the first to the eighth grade, then other teachers teach some subjects. On the one hand, this is very convenient for children, especially those who have difficulty adapting to new people. On the other hand, this is a huge power and influence that essentially binds each student to the teacher for life. It should be borne in mind that this can sometimes negatively affect the process of individual development and hinder the student's personal development, self-awareness, independent decision-making, and in some cases make him a hostage to the values and ideas of others.

Since the central thesis of the system states that "Children are taught what surrounds them," the teacher becomes only part of a specially prepared environment, or rather, its guide.

This approach is consistent with Carl Rogers' humanistic pedagogical concept. Rogers saw the main function of the teacher not in the mechanical transfer of knowledge, but in the formation of an environment that stimulates learning and supports the development of the personality (Rogers, 1983: 18). In this concept, the child's activity and creative potential are put in the main position, and interference in this process is not considered appropriate. The adult acts not as a ready-made provider of knowledge, but as a subject who guides the child's independent acquisition of ideas and knowledge about the world, and at the same time supports the process of analyzing and systematizing this knowledge. Until the child asks for help, the teacher only observes, but not passively, tries to see the child's inclinations and level of abilities, to offer him didactic material of appropriate complexity. The ethics of communication with the student are expressed here in some detail: communication at the same level (sitting on the floor or squatting next to him), mandatory response to requests, respect for mistakes, gentle stimulation for what has not been mastered, lack of criticism. Both the Waldorf and Montessori systems, which reject traditional pedagogical principles based on prohibition and coercion, set as their main goal the creation of pedagogical conditions that would allow the child to develop freely, stimulate internal motivation, and form a natural learning environment. This approach is in line with John Dewey's pragmatic pedagogical concept. Dewey noted: "Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself" (Dewey, 1916: 239).

Thus, modern education faces serious tasks that require not only the renewal of teaching methods, but also a deep reconsideration of the goals and principles of the education system. How can we solve the global problems of modern education and make it truly effective and accessible to all?

Global Education Problems and Innovative Solution Strategies

We present five global problems of modern education that require immediate solutions:

1) Mismatch of education with the requirements of the labor market. Educational programs often lag behind the dynamically changing requirements of the modern labor market. Graduates are not always ready for real professional challenges, they do not have the practical skills and competencies necessary for a successful career;

2) Digital literacy. Not all schools and universities have the necessary resources and competencies to effectively use digital technologies in the educational process, which can lead to inequalities in access to information and the quality of education. Some students have access to modern educational platforms and online courses, while others lag behind in the digital world.

3) Access. Education should be accessible to all children, regardless of financial status, location, or physical limitations. However, in many countries around the world, education remains the prerogative of the wealthy and privileged groups of the population. Children from poor and low-income families are often deprived of the opportunity to receive a quality education.

4) Emotional well-being. Increased workload, competition and stress have a negative impact on the mental health of students. Modern students often experience feelings of anxiety, depression and burnout. The education system should pay attention not only to the intellectual, but also to the emotional development of children.

Lack of qualified teachers. Today there is a shortage of qualified teachers. There are not enough specialists in certain fields of knowledge, as well as teachers who are ready to use modern teaching methods and work with children with diverse needs.

These problems require global solutions and cooperation of all participants in the educational process: government, teachers, parents and students themselves. It is important to make

education more accessible, focusing on the development of a holistic personality of the student, ready for the challenges of the modern world.

There are several effective ways to address global challenges in education in the 21st century, aimed at making it truly accessible to all. So, what can you do:

Integrate technologies. Digital technologies can be a powerful tool for solving educational problems. It is important to ensure equal access to digital resources for all children, introduce modern educational platforms, and train teachers to effectively use digital technologies in teaching.

Cooperation between educational institutions, business, and society. The education system should work closely with business representatives to create educational programs that meet the requirements of the modern labor market. It is important to include practical experience and practical training in the educational process so that students gain real experience and develop the necessary skills.

Accessible and inclusive education. Education should be accessible to all children, regardless of their financial situation, physical limitations, or place of residence. It is important to create conditions for inclusive education.

Pay attention to emotional well-being. The education system should pay attention to the emotional health of students. It is important to develop emotional intelligence in children, the ability to manage their emotions, resolve conflicts, and build healthy relationships.

In the modern world, acquiring knowledge and skills is a vital necessity. In previous times, the main indicator of a state's success was the amount of natural resources. However, in our time, educated personnel have the highest value. The higher the quality of education a state can provide, the higher its competitive advantage compared to other countries. Alvin Toffler characterized this changing reality as follows: "The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn" (*Alvin, 1970: 414*).

In modern society, progress is shaped by an ever-expanding knowledge base. In addition, education is an important source of economic growth and productivity. It also serves to form the human capital necessary for the application of new technologies in healthcare, industry and other areas and the provision of high-quality services to people. In this regard, Theodore Schultz's theory of human capital is noteworthy. Schultz noted that "education is an investment in human capital" (*Theodore, 1971: 26*).

Previously, a person could acquire a certain set of knowledge and use it throughout his life. Now, in the modern world, there is a need for continuous learning. A person should constantly be in search of new information. This approach is also consistent with Peter Senge's concept of the "learning society". According to Senge, "The ability to learn faster than your competitors may be the only sustainable competitive advantage" (*Peter, 1990: 4*).

Self-education is the most important component of a continuous education system. A person must independently find useful information and apply it in practice. But self-education requires discipline and responsibility. A person must find motivation to continue learning. This idea also resonates with the humanistic approach of Carl Rogers. Rogers wrote: "The only person who is educated is the one who has learned how to learn and change" (*Rogers, 1983: 120*).

3. Conclusions

The study found that the global social, technological and cultural transformations taking place in the modern era necessitate a reconsideration of the goals and content of the education

system. In this context, the concept of holistic education acts as an important pedagogical approach that considers the intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual development of the personality in an interconnected manner.

The study shows that alternative educational models such as Waldorf and Montessori are aimed at developing the student's individual potential, forming creative and critical thinking skills, as well as instilling humanistic values. At the same time, the modern education system is faced with important problems such as digital literacy, inclusiveness, emotional well-being and adaptation to the requirements of the labor market.

Consequently, in the conditions of the challenges of the 21st century, it is considered necessary to form education not only as a mechanism for transmitting knowledge, but also as a flexible and humanistic system that ensures the comprehensive development of the personality. In this regard, the holistic education approach can be assessed as one of the promising directions of modern pedagogical thought.

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