

# Holistic Education

An educational tradition that is deeply-rooted in the Sri Lanka culture.

# The Present

Contemporary formal education both in schools and universities and of professionals are not drawing on these traditions.

# Principles

**Holistic Education is  
based on the following  
principles**

# Knowledge has two main components

- Explicit Knowledge
- Tacit Knowledge

# Tacit Knowledge

- Tacit knowledge is not easily shared.
- Tacit knowledge shapes the way we perceive the world.
- Tacit knowledge refers to a knowledge possessed only by an individual and difficult to communicate to others.
- An individual can acquire tacit knowledge without language
- The key to acquiring tacit knowledge is experience. Without some form of shared experience, it is extremely difficult for people to share each other's thinking processes.

# Manifestations

Holistic education is manifested through persons being:

- Well informed and knowledgeable
- Skilful
- Self-disciplined
- Refined and cultured
- Able to speak effectively

Knowledge and Knowing are  
not ends in themselves

Eventually leads to

- **wholesome action, and**
- **'illumination'**

# Manifestations

Behaviours that are:

- **refined**
- **benign**
- **people friendly, and**
- **altruistic**



# The basis

A sensitization to the **realities of the human condition**

Things

- are changeable and do not last for ever
- have no core or unchanging spirit
- fail to satisfy in the long-term

# The Practice

Disciplining the body and the mind

- to be absorbed and be in the 'here and now'

# Communities of Practice

Promote and sustain Holistic Education

Learners

- **do not work in isolation, but**
- **reinforce each other, and**
- **create a group synergy**

# Learning Experiences

Learning experiences are not selected on a "reductionist" basis; they are not confined to the classroom, lecture theatre and laboratory

Specific objectives are not emphasized; these are simply markers on a lifelong path of development that aims at illumination

The rewards for learning are intrinsic, and built into the educational process

# A Pervasive Practice

Learners clean up their living areas and their environments, learning areas, after working and practising. After a learning experience the learners do not leave simply carrying a neat bundle of notes and other productions; s/he encounters also the waste that results from every activity.

# Concept of Waste

- Waste in the human condition takes many forms
- It is not only the material that is to be discarded; also includes liquids and gases
- Hurt feelings, strained relations, and unpleasant memories are also wastes
- Waste also accumulates within systems and bodies

# Holistic Cleansing

- Communities of Practice have to pay special attention to the handling and disposal of wastes that have emotional and mental contents
- Counselling, mentoring, and conflict resolution are essential
- Peer group and club activities also help to relieve stress

# Systems

Systems are viewed as entities that take inputs and give out not only useful outputs but also waste. In relation to the system the waste has no 'value' but can collect in the environment of the system.

Waste can also stay within a system and collect inside it without leaving



# Holistic view of a System

- A 'holistic view' will enable us to see and deal not only with the useful output but also enables us to see the waste and its after-effects on us and the environment.
- Waste if not properly managed and disposed of can cause pathologies and even destroy a community

# Essence of a Holistic Orientation

- The Learner with a holistic orientation will not only understand the inevitability of waste but also develop the sensitivity and even the ability to **read into** it for practical purposes.
- For instance, a technician or an engineer can identify how well an engine is functioning by analysing the waste gas coming through the exhaust pipe. An operator of a nuclear reactor can identify its condition at a given time by analysing the noise it produces. A doctor analyses the urine and excreta of a patient to make a diagnosis.

# A Holistic Approach

- A holistic approach enables us to realize the interconnectedness of entities that constitute our world and how they influence each other.
- An education with this approach will result in learners having **more than** mere 'soft skills' that are in vogue today

# Changeability and Impermanence

- A perception is developed as to the “changeability” of things and that the existence of any entity and arrangement is conditional.
- Conditionality for existence can be either internal or external
- Holistic Education would prepare a learner to deal with or respond to issues arising from this particular ‘nature’ of things

# More than being “Qualified”

- A holistically educated person may practise as a professional
- S/he would function in such slots by acquiring practical and technical skills, and knowledge and information relevant to the profession.
- S/he works with the understanding that there is learning that must necessarily and always happen on the job.

# The nature of Knowledge

- Another related understanding is that all the descriptions, theories and models as found in the literature, lessons etc do not truly represent the 'reality' they refer to.
- As such decisions regarding a situation in hand cannot be made solely on the basis of such representations.
- There are no 'best practices' that can be taken from another place and another time

# Professional Development

- The holistically educated person is aware that a decision or action taken at a given point of time is not valid for all time.
- Any new arrangement or remedy that appears to have resolved an issue at hand will result in changes in the context of that issue.
- The response to this eventuality is the follow through over a reasonable time span that enables the practitioner to learn and deal with issues that emerge as a result of her intervention.
- This an important aspect of holistic professional development.

# The Goal

The Goal of holistic education  
is to have a community that is:

Healthy

Happy, and

Peaceful.