

BOOK REVIEW / COMPTE-RENDU

MILLER, J. P. *The Holistic Curriculum*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. (2019). 248 pp. \$42.95 (PAPERBACK). (ISBN 978-1-4875-2317-6).

Jack Miller, an educator at the University of Toronto, is an author, editor, and scholar who has been contributing to the holistic education field for more than 40 years. His most recent work on the subject, a compelling exploration called *The Holistic Curriculum* (2019), examines the connections among subject, thinking, community, soul, body-mind, and earth. By citing from Indigenous scholars, philosophers, poets, authors, and politicians, he explains the unity across different perspectives and develops a transdisciplinary approach that he calls holistic curriculum. He discusses that a being (human) is a system of interacting dimensions, those dimensions are as such “the physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual” dimensions (p. 8). Miller addresses the necessity of educating a being as a complete system to connect them with those dimensions. He also addresses how holism in education can balance ego and soul, and connect the reason with intuition. He highlights holistic approach by using teaching and learning strategies and curriculum frameworks that aim to develop students’ wellbeing and sense of achievement.

Miller divides his book into two sections. The first section (chapters 1-5) elaborates a rationale for holistic curriculum. Miller traces holism historically in philosophy, economics, medicine, psychology, and other branches of knowledge. He considers how since the industrial revolution, humans have learned to compartmentalize and standardize. These trends detached human beings from nature. Further, he suggests, a modern world lifestyle has resulted in individualization and has cut off human beings from spirituality. Western education privileges reason over intuition, individual competition over group contribution, quantitative over qualitative, technique over vision, assessment over learning, leading to anxiety, social chaos and negative attitudes. According to Miller, a holistic curriculum learns from Indigenous peoples, so it views humans as beings who are interconnected with nature, mind, spirit, and other dimensions. Such interconnections foster wellbeing and happiness by bringing balance, inclusion, and connection. Drawing on ancient philosophy and the history of science,

he explains that balance. Miller underscores that the principal aim of holistic education is giving students “a sense of purpose in life” (p. 9) through helping them explore their interests, strengths, and abilities.

In the second section, chapters 6 to 11, Miller offers a detailed exploration of practical classroom techniques, strategies, and practices in holistic education. He suggests ways of bringing holistic education into the curriculum. He starts with discussing the focus of holistic education as on “relationships”: “The relationship between linear thinking and intuition, the relationship between mind and body, the relationship among various domains of knowledge, the relationship between individual and community, the relationship to the earth, and to our souls” (p. 89). He maintains that through a holistic curriculum, students should be able to understand these relationships. For example, the relationship between mind and body can be sensed through “mindfulness practices” at school. Using visualization techniques can enhance students’ creativity or increase their motivation for learning a topic. Socratic circles and metaphorical teaching can develop students’ critical thinking, social skills, listening skills, and confidence through encouraging comparison, discussions, visioning, interconnecting, and storying.

Overall, Miller emphasizes the inner self as a cornerstone of holistic teaching and learning. By interconnecting soul, mind, and body, students can overcome prioritizing their ego, competition, and materialism. Instead, they will come to appreciate compassion, with a sense of integrating with community in a healthy manner. Finally, Miller draws the readers’ attention to the importance of the integration of intellect with intuition to achieve wisdom, peace, and global happiness.

A wide range of readers such as education policy makers, educational researchers, curriculum designers, teacher educators, and pre-and in-service teachers can benefit from Miller’s book, as for him the most applicable remedy for solving today modern world’s crises and chaos is reforming Western education and replacing it with holism and a holistic curriculum theoretical framework.