



## Rehumanizing Modern Education: Spiritual Holistic Education as a Framework for Restoring Meaning and Human Wholeness

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### Abstract

Modern education has achieved significant progress in expanding access, standardization, and learning assessment. However, these achievements are accompanied by emerging challenges such as learning fatigue, psychological pressure, the loss of meaning in learning, and the reduction of human dimensions within educational systems. Education increasingly prioritizes measurable outcomes, standardized procedures, and academic competition, while often neglecting the holistic development of learners, including emotional, social, and spiritual aspects. This study aims to examine the crisis of meaning in modern education and propose the Spiritual Holistic Education (SHE) paradigm as an alternative conceptual framework to restore human wholeness in educational processes. The research employs a qualitative conceptual approach through literature review and critical analysis of contemporary educational theories and philosophical perspectives on human development. The findings indicate that modern education is dominated by quantification, bureaucratic management, and cognitive reduction, which gradually marginalize the existential dimensions of learners. Consequently, many students experience a crisis of identity, diminished sense of meaning, and weakened relational engagement within educational environments. The study proposes Spiritual Holistic Education as a paradigm integrating cognitive, emotional, social, and spiritual development in learning. SHE emphasizes reflective learning, relational pedagogy, and holistic assessment to cultivate inner awareness, ethical responsibility, and meaningful learning experiences.

### Abstrak

Pendidikan modern telah membuat kemajuan yang signifikan dalam memperluas akses, standarisasi, dan mengukur hasil pembelajaran. Namun, kemajuan ini disertai dengan berbagai permasalahan seperti saturasi pembelajaran, tekanan psikologis, hilangnya makna pembelajaran, dan berkurangnya dimensi kemanusiaan dalam sistem pendidikan. Pendidikan sering mengedepankan hasil yang terukur, prosedur standar, dan persaingan akademik, sedangkan pembangunan manusia secara keseluruhan yang mencakup dimensi emosional, sosial, dan spiritual kurang mendapat perhatian. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis krisis makna dalam pendidikan modern dan menawarkan paradigma Pendidikan Holistik Spiritual (SHE) sebagai kerangka konseptual alternatif untuk mengembalikan integritas manusia dalam proses pendidikan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif konseptual melalui kajian literatur dan analisis kritis teori pendidikan kontemporer serta perspektif filosofis tentang pembangunan manusia. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan modern terjebak dalam dominasi kuantifikasi, birokratisasi sistem, dan reduksi kognitif yang perlahan meminggirkan dimensi eksistensial siswa. Kondisi ini menyebabkan siswa mengalami krisis identitas, kehilangan makna, dan melemahnya hubungan di lingkungan pendidikan. Penelitian ini

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mengusulkan Pendidikan Holistik Spiritual sebagai paradigma yang mengintegrasikan pengembangan kognitif, emosional, sosial, dan spiritual dalam proses pembelajaran. SHE menekankan pada pemulihan makna, pengembangan kesadaran batin, dan pembentukan tanggung jawab etis dalam pendidikan. Implementasi SHE dapat diwujudkan melalui pembelajaran reflektif, pedagogi relasional, dan sistem penilaian formatif-holistik yang menekankan pertumbuhan manusia secara keseluruhan. Paradigma ini berkontribusi pada reorientasi pendidikan dari sistem berbasis kinerja menjadi proses pembangunan manusia yang berpusat pada makna.

## INTRODUCTION

Modern education has undergone rapid transformation during the last decades. Advances in technology, globalization, and the expansion of educational access have significantly improved the structure and management of educational institutions. Educational systems are increasingly organized through standardized curricula, measurable learning outcomes, and systematic assessment mechanisms. These developments aim to ensure accountability, quality assurance, and comparability of educational achievements across institutions and countries.

However, behind these achievements lies a growing concern regarding the direction and meaning of education. Many scholars argue that modern education has gradually shifted from a human development process toward a performance driven system (Biesta, 2015). Learning is frequently reduced to measurable outcomes such as test scores, academic rankings, and standardized indicators. As a consequence, the broader purposes of education such as character development, ethical awareness, and the search for meaning are often marginalized.

The dominance of quantification has also transformed the way students experience education. Instead of perceiving learning as a meaningful exploration of knowledge and personal development, many students experience education as a competitive system of evaluation. Academic achievement becomes the primary indicator of success, while other dimensions of human development receive less attention. Several studies indicate that excessive academic competition contributes to increasing levels of anxiety, burnout, and psychological stress among students (OECD, 2021).

Another significant challenge is the growing bureaucratization of educational institutions. Schools and universities are increasingly governed by administrative procedures, performance indicators, and institutional reporting requirements. While such mechanisms aim to improve accountability, they often create unintended consequences for the learning environment. Teachers spend considerable time fulfilling administrative tasks, reducing opportunities for reflective teaching and meaningful interaction with students.

In addition to cognitive reduction and bureaucratic pressures, modern education also faces a deeper existential challenge: the loss of meaning in learning. Many students pursue educational goals without understanding their broader purpose. Education becomes a pathway to certification and employment rather than a process of self understanding and ethical development. This phenomenon reflects a broader crisis of meaning within contemporary society, where individuals struggle to connect their activities with a coherent sense of purpose.

The crisis of meaning is closely related to the neglect of spiritual and relational dimensions in education. Human beings are not merely cognitive agents; they are also emotional, relational, and spiritual beings. Education that focuses exclusively on intellectual performance risks producing individuals who are technically competent but lack moral orientation and inner awareness.

In response to these challenges, scholars have increasingly explored alternative educational paradigms that emphasize holistic human development. Holistic education seeks to integrate intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions within learning processes. Rather than focusing solely on academic achievement, holistic education aims to cultivate self-awareness, ethical responsibility, and meaningful engagement with society.

One conceptual framework that addresses these concerns is Spiritual Holistic Education (SHE). This paradigm emphasizes the integration of knowledge, values, and inner awareness in educational practice. SHE proposes that education should not only transfer knowledge but also guide learners toward understanding themselves, their responsibilities, and their role within society.

This article aims to analyze the crisis of meaning in modern education and to explore the conceptual foundations of Spiritual Holistic Education as a paradigm for restoring human wholeness in educational systems. By examining contemporary educational challenges and theoretical perspectives on human development, this study seeks to contribute to ongoing discussions about the future direction of education in a rapidly changing world

## **METHODS**

This research employs a qualitative conceptual approach using literature review and critical analysis. The study focuses on examining the philosophical foundations and theoretical discussions related to modern educational crises and holistic educational paradigms.

Data sources consist of academic literature, including journal articles, books, and policy reports related to education philosophy, holistic education, human development, and spiritual education. Key references include works discussing educational measurement, student well being, and meaning centered education.

The data collection process involved systematic literature identification through academic databases and scholarly publications. Relevant sources were selected based on their contribution to discussions on modern educational challenges and alternative educational paradigms. Data analysis was conducted using interpretative and thematic analysis. Concepts related to educational crisis, human development, and holistic learning were categorized and examined to identify patterns and relationships between theoretical perspectives. The analysis aimed to synthesize insights from various disciplines, including education, psychology, and philosophy, in order to develop a conceptual understanding of Spiritual Holistic Education as an alternative paradigm for contemporary education.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Crisis of Meaning in Modern Education**

Modern education was originally designed to present a more structured, standardized, and objectively evaluable learning system. The use of achievement indicators, curriculum standards, and test-based evaluation mechanisms is intended to ensure the quality and accountability of the education system. However, in subsequent developments, this orientation slowly shifted to the dominance of the logic of performance that placed measurable results as the main indicator of educational success. Exam scores, standardized assessment scores, academic rankings, and various institutional indicators are the main benchmarks in assessing the success of students and educational institutions. In these conditions, educational success is often understood narrowly as the accumulation of academic achievements that can be calculated and compared (Biesta, 2015).

The dominance of quantification ultimately shifts the orientation of education from the process of human formation to a performance production system. Learning is no longer fully understood as a journey of understanding oneself and life, but as a strategy to achieve the targets that have been set by the evaluation system. Students are encouraged to master the material to be tested and achieve high scores, while more basic questions about the meaning of learning are often overlooked. This condition suggests that modern education tends to place numbers as the main representation of success, although these numbers are not always able to describe the entire process of human development (OECD, 2021).

When education is too oriented towards measurable achievement, the meaning of learning slowly erodes. Many students succeed academically but do not always understand the relevance of education to their development and social responsibility. Learning becomes an administratively dense activity but lacks existential reflection. In situations like this, students can experience

alienation from the educational process they are undergoing. They follow the curriculum, complete assignments, and achieve high grades, but do not always feel that the process helps them understand who they are and how they contribute to social life (Biesta, 2017).

This phenomenon is also closely related to the increasing culture of academic competition in the modern education system. When grades and rankings become the main symbols of success, learning turns into a competitive arena that demands students to outperform others. Schools are no longer perceived primarily as collaborative learning communities, but as selection spaces that determine who is considered successful and who is left behind. Criticism of the culture of competition in education has long been conveyed by various education scholars who show that excessive academic competition can weaken the intrinsic motivation of students and shift the meaning of learning from the process of understanding to just a strategy to win the assessment system (Kohn, 1999).

In addition, modern education is also increasingly influenced by managerial and bureaucratic logic that demands efficiency, accountability, and measurable performance standards. Schools and universities are increasingly regulated through performance indicators, administrative reports, and educational audit systems. Although these mechanisms are intended to improve the quality of education, in practice they often produce unintended consequences for the learning process. Teachers must allocate significant time to meet administrative demands, so that the space to build a deep pedagogical relationship with students becomes increasingly limited (Ball, 2016).

In a broader context, the crisis of meaning in modern education also reflects the crisis of meaning that occurs in contemporary society. Rapid social change, the development of digital technology, and the uncertainty of the future of work have created an increasingly complex and unpredictable world. In situations like these, learners need not only technical or cognitive skills, but also value orientation and reflective abilities that help them understand life goals as well as make ethical decisions in various life situations (OECD, 2018). However, when education focuses more on mastering measurable technical competencies, these reflective and existential dimensions often do not receive adequate attention.

This crisis of meaning ultimately shows that the main problem of modern education lies not only in the effectiveness of teaching methods or the quality of the curriculum, but also in the perspective of the underlying human being. Education that is too influenced by the technocratic paradigm tends to see students as objects that must be managed and measured, not as subjects who are undergoing the process of finding the meaning of life. In fact, humans are not only cognitive beings who process information, but also beings who seek meaning, build relationships, and develop value orientation in their lives (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

In the perspective of Spiritual Holistic Education (SHE), this crisis signifies the need for a paradigm shift in understanding education. Education is not enough to be directed at improving academic performance alone, but must return to its basic purpose as a process of human formation as a whole. Learning needs to integrate intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions so that students not only develop as academically competent individuals, but also as human beings who have self-awareness, moral integrity, and social responsibility. Thus, education can again become a space for the meaning of life, not just a mechanism for producing academic achievements (UNESCO, 2021).

### **Reduction of Human Dimensions in Modern Education**

One of the most fundamental consequences of the dominance of the performance paradigm in modern education is the reduction of the human dimension in the educational process. Education systems that focus too much on academic achievement and measurable indicators tend to place cognitive abilities as the center of attention, while other dimensions of human development such as emotional, social, moral, and spiritual aspects are often overlooked. In practice, students' success is more assessed through test scores, achievement indexes, and academic rankings, while the quality of self-reflection, social empathy, moral integrity, and life orientation are rarely an important part of the educational evaluation process (Biesta, 2015).

This educational approach that overemphasizes the cognitive dimension results in a narrow understanding of human development. Students are encouraged to master technical knowledge and skills, but are not always guided to understand the meaning of that knowledge for their lives. As a result, education risks producing individuals who are intellectually competent but lack reflective depth and social sensitivity. Criticism of the reduction of education to a mere process of knowledge transmission has long been conveyed by education thinkers who affirm that education should play a role in forming a whole human being, not just producing a productive workforce (Noddings, 2013).

In addition, the modern education system also often ignores the relational dimension in the learning process. The relationship between teachers and students is in many cases increasingly influenced by administrative pressures, a dense curriculum, and demands to achieve academic targets. Teachers are often positioned as material presenters and evaluation managers, while the space to build deep pedagogical relationships is increasingly limited. In fact, a meaningful relationship between educators and students is one of the important factors that support character development, confidence, and intrinsic motivation in learning (Palmer, 2007).

The reduction in the humanitarian dimension is also seen in the lack of attention to the emotional development of students. Many education systems still consider emotions as aspects that are outside the realm of formal learning. In fact, research in educational psychology shows that the ability to manage emotions, build empathy, and develop self-awareness is an important component in the success of learning and social life. Without the development of emotional intelligence, students can experience difficulties in dealing with academic pressure, building healthy relationships, and making wise decisions in various life situations (Goleman, 1995).

Furthermore, the spiritual dimension as part of human development hardly gets adequate space in many modern education systems. Spirituality is often narrowly perceived as a personal religious practice, so it is not considered relevant to the academic learning process. In fact, spirituality in the context of education can be understood as awareness of the meaning of life, value orientation, and the ability of humans to reflect on the purpose of their existence. Without a spiritual dimension, education risks losing the normative direction that guides human knowledge and action (Astin, Astin, & Lindholm, 2011).

The consequence of the reduction of these various dimensions of humanity is the emergence of fragmented human development. Learners may have high analytical skills, but they may not necessarily have social sensitivity, empathy for others, or a strong moral awareness. Education produces individuals who are able to solve technical problems, but are not necessarily able to understand the complexity of humanitarian problems. This condition shows that the modern education system still faces great challenges in integrating various dimensions of human development in a balanced manner.

In the perspective of Spiritual Holistic Education (SHE), the reduction of the human dimension is an indication that modern education is still trapped in a reductionist paradigm that views humans partially. SHE views that human beings are creatures that have intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions that are interconnected and inseparable. Therefore, education needs to be designed as a process that integrates the four dimensions in a harmonious manner. Learning not only aims to develop critical thinking skills, but also fosters self-awareness, social empathy, moral integrity, and a meaningful life orientation.

Thus, efforts to overcome the reduction of the humanitarian dimension in education require a more fundamental paradigm shift. Education needs to move from an approach that focuses solely on the mastery of knowledge to an approach that places human development as the main goal. Through the integration of cognitive, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions, education can once again carry out its function as a process of human humanization a process that not only educates the mind, but also shapes human character, consciousness, and responsibility in common life (UNESCO, 2021).

## The Concept of Spiritual Holistic Education

Spiritual Holistic Education proposes an alternative framework that integrates intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions within educational processes. The concept emphasizes the importance of inner awareness, ethical values, and meaningful relationships in learning environments.

SHE recognizes that education should support the development of the whole person rather than focusing solely on academic outcomes. In this framework, learning becomes a process of self-discovery, ethical reflection, and social responsibility.

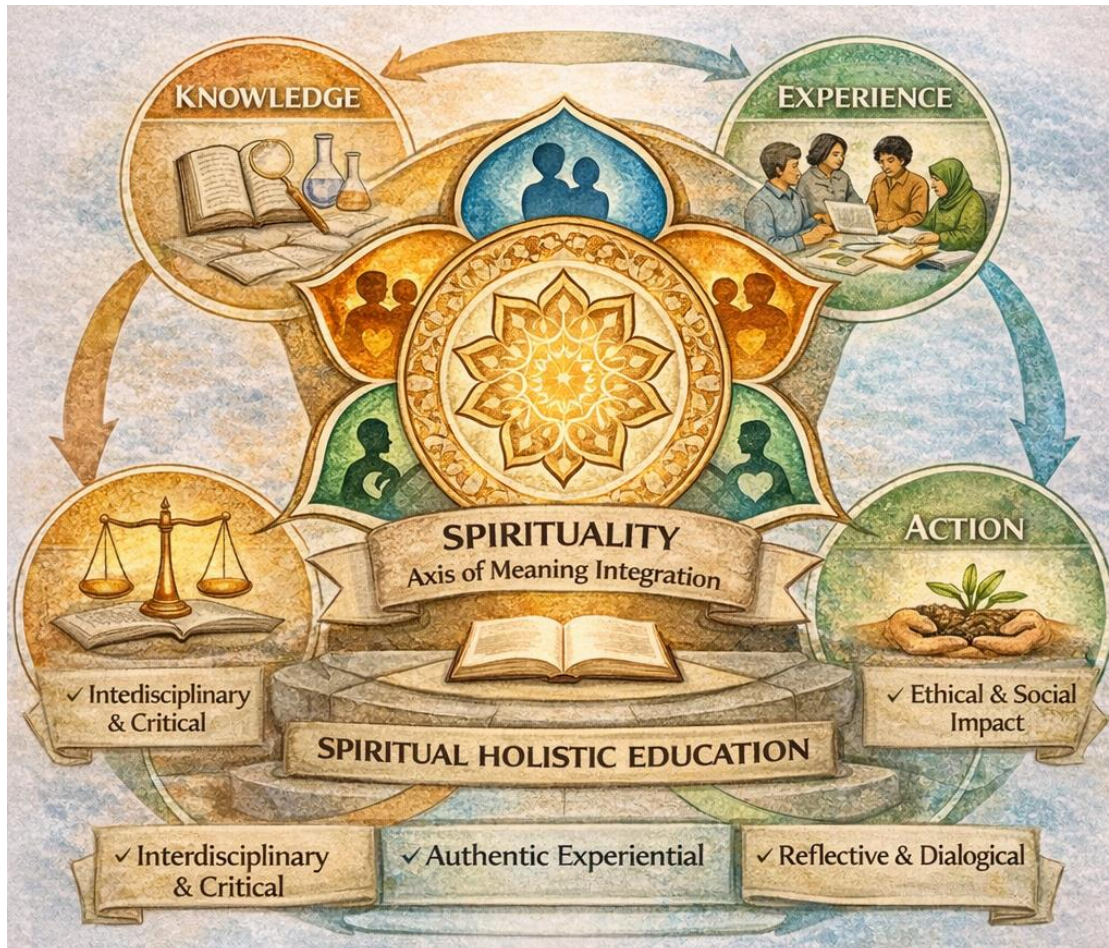


Figure 1. Integrated and Contextual Learning in Spiritual Holistic Education (SHE)

The model of Integrated and Contextual Learning in Spiritual Holistic Education (SHE) illustrates how learning processes integrate knowledge, experience, values, and action within a meaningful educational framework. In this model, spirituality functions as the central axis of meaning, guiding the integration of various dimensions of learning and ensuring that education contributes to the formation of whole human beings.

The first dimension is knowledge, which represents conceptual understanding and intellectual exploration. Learners engage with interdisciplinary knowledge and critical inquiry to develop analytical thinking and the ability to understand complex issues. The second dimension is experience, referring to authentic learning experiences that connect theoretical knowledge with real-life situations. Experiential learning allows students to engage actively with problems, collaborate with others, and construct knowledge through meaningful interaction.

The third dimension is action, which emphasizes the application of knowledge and values in real social contexts. Through action-oriented learning, students develop ethical responsibility and contribute to society in ways that create meaningful social impact.

At the center of these interconnected dimensions lies spirituality, described in the model as the *axis of meaning integration*. Spirituality provides the reflective foundation that connects knowledge, experience, and action with deeper values and life purposes.

The learning process in Spiritual Holistic Education (SHE) is characterized by several key principles that support the development of learners as whole human beings. First, interdisciplinary and critical learning encourages students to explore knowledge from multiple perspectives and disciplines while developing critical thinking skills to analyze complex issues in society. This approach allows learners to understand problems not only from a single academic field but through integrated knowledge that reflects real-life complexity. Second, authentic experiential learning emphasizes learning through meaningful experiences that connect theoretical knowledge with real-world contexts. Through projects, field activities, and community engagement, students actively construct knowledge while developing collaboration, empathy, and social responsibility. Third, reflective and dialogical learning invites learners to engage in self-reflection and meaningful dialogue with peers and educators. Reflection enables students to interpret their learning experiences, evaluate their actions, and connect knowledge with personal values and life purposes. Dialogue, in turn, fosters openness, mutual understanding, and collective learning. Together, these principles create a holistic learning environment in which knowledge, experience, values, and action are integrated, enabling education to cultivate intellectual competence, ethical awareness, and meaningful engagement with society. Through this integrated approach, education becomes a process that unites knowledge, experience, values, and action within a meaningful contextual framework, enabling learners to develop intellectual competence, ethical awareness, and social responsibility simultaneously.

### **Implementing Holistic Educational Practices**

The implementation of Spiritual Holistic Education (SHE) is grounded in several interconnected principles that aim to restore the humanistic and meaningful dimensions of education. At the heart of this approach lies relational pedagogy, which emphasizes the importance of meaningful relationships between teachers and students. In this perspective, education is not merely a process of transmitting knowledge but a relational encounter in which teachers act as guides, mentors, and moral exemplars. Through authentic interaction, empathy, and mutual respect, the learning environment becomes a space where students feel valued, recognized, and supported in their intellectual as well as personal growth. Such relational dynamics nurture trust and create conditions for deeper engagement in learning.

Another essential principle is reflective learning, which encourages learners to examine their experiences, beliefs, and aspirations in order to develop a deeper understanding of themselves and their life purposes. Reflection allows students to connect academic knowledge with personal meaning, transforming learning from a mechanical activity into a process of self-awareness and personal development. Through reflective practices such as dialogue, journaling, and critical discussion students learn to evaluate their actions, understand their values, and align their knowledge with ethical responsibility.

Equally important is the principle of holistic assessment, which moves beyond the traditional emphasis on summative evaluation and standardized testing. In SHE, assessment is understood as a formative and developmental process that supports continuous growth. Teachers provide constructive feedback that not only measures cognitive achievement but also recognizes emotional maturity, collaborative engagement, and ethical awareness. This approach acknowledges that meaningful learning cannot be fully captured through numerical scores alone; rather, it requires an evaluative process that appreciates the complexity of human development.

Complementing these principles is value-based education, which integrates ethical and spiritual awareness into the learning process. In this framework, knowledge is never detached from values. Instead, learning activities are designed to cultivate integrity, empathy, responsibility, and a sense of purpose in life. Spiritual awareness becomes the guiding orientation that connects knowledge, experience, and action with broader moral and social commitments.

Through the integration of relational pedagogy, reflective learning, holistic assessment, and value-based education, Spiritual Holistic Education seeks to transform education from a performance-driven system into a meaningful human development process. In this paradigm, education does not merely aim to produce academically successful individuals but to nurture learners who are intellectually capable, emotionally resilient, spiritually aware, and ethically responsible in their engagement with society.

## **Conclusion**

Modern education faces a significant challenge in maintaining its humanistic orientation amid increasing standardization and quantification. The dominance of measurable outcomes, academic competition, and bureaucratic management has gradually marginalized the deeper purposes of education. This study highlights the importance of reorienting education toward a more holistic understanding of human development. Spiritual Holistic Education offers a conceptual framework that integrates intellectual growth with emotional, social, and spiritual awareness.

By restoring meaning, relational depth, and ethical responsibility within learning processes, SHE provides a pathway toward educational systems that support the development of whole human beings rather than merely producing academic performers. Future educational reforms should therefore consider integrating holistic learning approaches, reflective pedagogy, and formative assessment systems to ensure that education remains fundamentally human centered.

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