

# Holistic Learning In Technology Age

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## Abstract

Human learning process do not take place on nothing, but are based on idea, beliefs and views of the world that humans have of all things which is called a paradigm. The paradigm affects both the perception and the way humans act on things. Knowledge, therefore, has a variety of characteristics that require different learning processes, both in transferring knowledge and creating new knowledge. Education is an important process in the creation of knowledge so that human beings can develop themselves holistically. In addition, problems are found in teaching and learning of higher education institutions in important aspects: for example, teachers often teach in a lecture style, transfer knowledge in a way for learners to imitate. Moreover, in teaching and learning process, the focus is on memorization for exams rather than on students' thinking, analyzing and seeking knowledge. As a result, the learners are found lack of the inquisitive mind, and the learning is focused on theoretical subjects rather than practice, and lack of teaching and learning that are consistent with reality.

Holistic learning management is designed for technology-driven teaching and learning, with more information technology being used in the teaching and learning process. The rapid growth and development of technology, network and internet systems allow students to utilize more information. Innovation in teaching media resulting from the advancement of computer technology makes educators try to use the potential of these technologies to produce several new teaching materials. Examples of teaching media innovations are CAI, multimedia, teleconference, instructional module and interactive video, etc.

## Introduction

The perspective of the total work performance enabled the organizations to clearly perceive their needs. The holistic thinking process allowed them to look at the whole process of their works and helped them to understand and perceive the whole picture through sensing its large scale pattern and to prevent possible problems. Although the function of the human brain is complex with multi-dimensions of thinking process, the process does not organized in order. It is necessary, therefore, for people to develop the process of holistic and systematic thinking in order

to create self-identity from the capability of their own brain.

It is noteworthy that the successful person will have a systems thinking process, he or she has the ability to perceive the whole picture through sensing its large scale patterns. This is because his or her thinking process has been systematically compiled. In terms of performance, therefore, he or she can achieve successfully. Therefore, it is necessary for organization to adopt the concept of systems thinking to their employees by empowering them to see things holistically and systematically which generate an advantage over their competitors. The

concept of Brain Based Learning (BBL) was based scientifically on the latest neurological research concerning human brain development and functioning, which contributed to the holistic thinking process to be in line with the individual brain functioning development. This could be implemented by searching for the systematic relationship from the performing tasks that led to the conclusion of the working system, decision-making, and planning for performance execution efficiently and effectively. As a result, the organizations could gain benefits from the holistic thinking of their employees.

### **The Concept of the Holistic Approach**

The word “holistic” (Department of Industrial Promotion, B.E. 2549) came from Greek word holos, which meant “relating to or concerned with wholes or with complete system with identity and wholeness as the ability to see the whole picture, to understand and to predict the inter-dependencies of various component parts.” The Oxford Advanced Learner’s dictionary defined the word “holistic” as “considering a whole thing or bring to be more than a collection of parts.” The word “holistic” approach was considered difficult to understand but used widely in academic and political areas. Nevertheless, the word “holistic” was used for the purpose of clearly perceiving and understanding the goal, and related to the word “integration”, ‘complement’, and sustainment”. The holistic approach was used in problem-solving and development of Thai Society. It was also used as one of the key words in the Eighth and the Ninth National Economic and social Development Plans. It was also notable that this holistic approach was significant to the future of Thai people.

The holistic learning (www: Prachachart Business Online, B.E. 2561)

was opposite to the learning by memorizing and reciting for the examination. The holistic learning emphasizes on learning at all dimensions and learning to understand the society. It was the learning to connect the learner ideas to the vital data and to their minds. However, it looked as if the holistic learning was unlikely pushed into Thai educational system. It was obvious that holistic learning was appropriate, especially in the disruptive period that technology had challenged human’s capability and wisdom. It is, therefore, necessary to increase needed competency promptly, by implementing the learning pattern that could bring out the individual hidden-capability to achieve difficult tasks.

Accordingly, the organization or the institution that have applied the holistic learning approach have searched for the holistic learning methods for thriving the learners to become wholesome. The rapid growth of technology in the twenty-first century enhanced the big data for people to pick up. As a result, knowledge has been turned into products classified out of oneself. The learners had to be conscious and open up in order to grasp and made use of the holistic knowledge. Instead of projecting where they would be in the future, they should, conversely, concentrate on how they could acquire the knowledge and differentiate the problems occurring at present. Especially, the educational institution needed to find methods to put the holistic learning into their curriculum. The students should learn to look into their own minds and be at present. In addition, the participating relationship should be practiced in schools.

Relating to the child development, instead of allowing children to develop naturally, they could be encouraged to practice self-development training. The children were often left behind that the process of child development depended on the children development stages. Pushing

the children into the inappropriate development stages, it was often found that there were many factors indicating the necessity in building the remedial education programs, as a result of the educational program did not meet the needs of the children. For this reason, the holistic learning approach and the learning method that reinforced the children understanding would enhance the overall physical, intellectual, emotional, social, spiritual mind and health development. These factors were not emphasized in the traditional education which gave attention to academic competencies and in-class learning. The factors mentioned earlier were emphasized in the holistic learning which gave more attention to the relationship between the data from the body of knowledge and the mind to create complete human beings.

### **The Holistic Education Approach**

The Holistic Education is a philosophy of education that indicates the importance of building the equilibrium based on the premise that each individual finds identity, meaning and purpose of life through the connections to the natural world. The holistic learning is a trans-formative learning by integrating knowledge and skills in sciences, arts and self-directed learning process, without decomposition or in-depth details into each field of education, but emphasizing on balancing managing the proportion of inner educational substance process and developing the inner capability of the learners.

At present, the holistic education management or education for the overall development has been developed in many ways. It started from various educational concepts and philosophies. There were many schools around the world claimed to manage the holistic learning at their schools. Although the holistic education

has been widely known, it has been difficult to point out the true characteristics of holistic education management. Many educators and scholars have given the meaning and the concepts of the holistic education. They were as follows:

Forbes (2004) mentioned the elements of the holistic education to develop six sagacious competencies but not separate aspects, as follows:

1. Freedom as a complex concept of psychological freedom independence, or as it is sometimes called “inner liberation”.
2. Good-judgment – closely related to self-governance and autonomy.
3. Meta-learning – emphasis on students learning, how they, as individual, learns.
4. Social ability – learning more than social skills, with attention to being “in society, but not of it.”
5. Refining values – the students’ development of characters and qualities, not the schools’ values or ethos.
6. Self-knowledge – complex concept that involves more than learning about oneself, but encompasses more suitable learning of the nature of oneself.

Ron Miller (2000) stated that the holistic education was based on the personnel development to be able to discover their identity and their purpose in life through the connections to the community, to the natural world, and to the spiritual values such as compassion and peace. Besides, Miller also compared the holistic learning approach and the traditional education paradigm that the traditional education paradigm emphasized

on preparing students to disconnect the relationship of oneself towards the environment by motivating the students to survive the competition in the job market of the capitalist society. The traditional education approach resulted in the separate, unrelated subjects. By contrasts, holistic education focused on the process of learning and taught different subjects as one interrelated whole. Besides, the holistic education emphasized on the relationship of each individual to the world, the meaning and its context toward each individual through multi cultural environment.

Chindarat Phonok (B.E. 2557) defined holistic education that it was the method of human development and the management of learning that considered individual multi-dimensions in physical, spiritual (mind), intellectual, cognitive, and art appreciative learning, depending on the goal setting. The holistic education management gave attention to the individual life experience. Even though it was composed of various components, if each component consisted of inner context and connected to other components dynamically. The educational management, therefore, had to be integrated

and supported life development. The principle of the holistic education was based on the concept of Gestalt Psychology which looks at the human mind and their behavior as a whole. When studying the individual behavior, one needs to determine the whole. It cannot be determined or explained by its component parts alone. This is because the whole is more valuable than the sum of its constitutive parts.

The holistic education focused on the learning process that enabled the learners to have self-discovery, which occurred from the inner stimulus to understand the meaning and the goals of

life, build awareness, self-understanding and emphasized in physical, spiritual, emotional, arts and creative development. The holistic education approach connected to various instructional patterns, for example the knowledge of the brain function which links to the language learning via the whole language approach, managing the curriculum, learning activities, learning media and the evaluation method, according to Waldorf, education emphasized on physical learning by doing, on spiritual learning, arts appreciation, and the cultivation of students' imagination and thinking in ways that meets their developmental needs.

The holistic education approach is the approach that needs the continuity of operation. This resulted in being disheartened, being tired of, and inattentive some time. It was, therefore, important for teachers to choose appropriate motivation methods for learners. The teachers should motivate the learners to develop their capabilities continuously. It is known that the motivation is complex in nature. Many professionals try to have access to stimulate the motivation of the learners. However, the fact is that there is no theory to give explanation to building individual motivation in all cases. Therefore, in the definition of the "leadership," the two main components of the word "leadership" were trust and results. Thus, the teacher should recognize the needs of the learners by building trust. The teachers must be able to support, give advice to the learners. At the same time, the learners must realize that the support and advice from the teachers, then the learners would have inspiration in doing something.

One sample of the university that offers holistic studies program is John F. Kennedy University, which was founded in 1964, the John F. Kennedy University caters for adult education learners in vocational and vision-quest experience.

The John F. Kennedy University empowered the importance of intellectual search, nurture vision and spirit, including community improvement and environmental awareness. The university had offered the holistic education as the interdisciplinary and experimental learning with the respect of individual and cultural differences to uphold the world that depends on each other. The School of Holistic Studies of the John f. Kennedy University offered the programs, such as Holistic Health Education, Counseling Psychology, Trans- formative Arts, Consciousness Studies, and Trans-personal Psychology. The School of Holistic Studies draws upon the growing understanding of how body, mind, and spirit interact. Its programs required a foundation of study in world religions and paradigms of consciousness, personal growth work, and an ongoing spiritual practices, such as meditation and other creative practices to integrate theory into practice.

The Holistic Education Movement in Thailand originated before the National Education Reform in B.E. 2542. The Reform received interests as it had developed alternative education which had been offered in formal, non-formal, informal education, including home school. In provision of education, the priority was for the individual to had more rights and opportunities in learning, while the content standard in the curriculum was the secondary importance. Besides, the teachers had to change their roles from directing the teaching and learning to enable the learners to have empirical learning which provided opportunities of learning through reflection feedback, and application of skills and ideas to any situation. Later, there was the concept of “student-centered” in the basic education program. Although the student-centered learning had originated from the concept of

holistic education, when putting into practice in the educational institutes, it was off the goals and could not be achieved in most of the educational institutes. The reasons were the teachers and the administrators did not change their attitude, responsibilities, and administrative roles to facilitate the holistic learning approach. Thus, the basic educational management problems could be seen obviously.

According to the opinion of Thai educator who stated the importance of the Twenty-First Century Education in Thailand that it aimed at making learners to acquire knowledge by themselves. (Vicharn Panich, B.E. 2562), he indicated the relationship and the connection between holistic learning and trans-formative learning, and the explanation on how to make modern Thai students have trans-formative learning, in other words, the type of learning aimed to transform learners, other people and the society.

Trans-formative learning is the learning that enables individual to reformulate his or her capacity of self, specific beliefs, attitudes, and emotional reactions, even his or her paradigm. When the learners receive knowledge via trans-formative learning, they will have Passion (Chanta), Perseverance (Wiriya) and Capability of being the Change Agent, including Leadership Skills. They enable change within any group, organization, community, society and country. This is the goal of holistic learning, the type of learning that educates the whole person in many dimensions. Thus, this is the definition of the holistic learning from the perspective of modern education management.

The acquisition of trans-formative learning which led to to the development of the leadership skill, involved three major skills, these were: the change of instructional methods in school and

university; the change of teacher training; the change of teaching skills and their attitude of teaching.

In terms of the teacher' roles for trans-formative learning, the teacher must be trained to make a big shift from the content-based learning to learning by doing with competency and skill-based learning. According to the Theory of Modern Learning about the study of the brain science and the researches in Cognitive Psychology viewed acquiring new knowledge and skill as an active process and concluded that the complete learning must be mixed between the in-put learning and the out-put learning. The in-put learning is to bring knowledge received from practice into the brain to make the learner understand and the out-put learning is to transmit, to teach others, to write a Reflective Journal, to participate in doing reflective learning to listen and share ideas among group members.

At present, there have been a few schools that have offered holistic learning, for example: Roong-Aroon School, and LamplaimatPattana School. In these school, the kindergarten children could draw mind maps to explain the things they have done and learned, even though their ability to write is not proficient enough. However, the children could understand what they had done. The evidence was that the children's works were posted in front of their classroom to show that they could learn by doing in the holistic learning method. Besides, the children learned to have collaboration with peers in order to understand themselves and their friends and vice versa. As a result, they learned to communicate through activity- based-learning which allowed them to obtain knowledge and used that knowledge for the benefits of themselves and their society.

### **Holistic Learning and Technology**

The holistic learning was designed to be powered by technology, especially the information technology, to manage the data starting from data collection, data analysis, assessment of data , and connecting data to the concerning office and organization. According to the research, the learners did the electronic transaction and used the mobile phones to create innovative works. For this reason, they could increase their capabilities in working effectively, promptly, worth investing and increased the communication channel.

The rapid growth and development of the network system technology and internet enhanced the learners to use the data to develop their work performance from their performance process to the extension of performance range. At the same time, the internet system could connect the enormous networks and become a digital market to link the buyers and the sellers, including the electronic data interchange in trading goods and services, and payment system. This virtual organization of the learners consisted of six major characteristics, as follows:

1. A vertically disintegrated (flattened) organization.
2. Working process shift to the fast, economical and rely on less employees. On the other hand, the virtual organization utilize more data in administration, emphasized more in creative skills for working than using manpower.
3. No dependence in time or space, the learner could use strategy, co-ordination and consulting the teacher without the limitation of time and place.
4. Working flexibility which could respond to the needs of customers.
5. The co-working environment connected the learner and the concerned

people for effectiveness, less time consuming which helped achieved goals.

According to the results of the research (Azumah, Koh & Maguire, 2006), on the organizational forms in the internet era, the success of the organization did not depend only on the size of the organization nor the use of high technological network, but depended on other various factors, for instance, having strategic partnership with the concerning sectors, such as suppliers. The management of the supply chain in the organization (Nath & Angels, 2007), stated that in the information economy age, people witnessed the economic system moved forward by data communication and making decision via worldwide networks. Knowledge was one of the important assets of the organization. It enabled the organization to build and increase knowledge to become the learning organization, using the mechanism of knowledge management starting from acquiring knowledge to create new concepts or new trends.

#### Educational Innovation

Apart from the digital technology, other innovative technology was also important to the individual and the organization. It is beneficial to use the invention for self-development, for the progress of the organization and of the country. In other words, the innovative concept must lead to the innovative products. The innovative educational development included remaking, renovation, and modification for teaching and learning. These were consisted of five categories as follows:

1. The innovation for instructional media. As a result of the access to computer technology, computer network, and telecommunication, many educators tried to make use of these potentiality in producing the instructional media for individual, group and mass learning,

including producing media for training via computer networks, such as Computer-Assisted in Instruction (CAI), multimedia, teleconference, instructional module, and interactive video, etc.

2. The innovation for instructional method. The key features of the innovative instructional management were, such as the innovative instructional methods, the instructional media, the partial innovative methods. For instance, there was innovative instructional package, but still used the traditional format, or it was in the on-going testing process whether it was the new method that had been accepted and used in the classroom but was not widespread or the method that had been readjusted, tryout, and re-publicized. These were noteworthy called innovation. (Sukon Sintapanon, B.E. 2551)

3. The innovation in curriculum management. The curriculum development used the innovative method to be in line with local environment and response to the needs of individual. The fact that the curriculum needed to be adjusted to catch up with the progress in technology, economy and society. In order to develop curriculum according to such local and national goals, the educational innovation was needed.

4. The innovation in instrument had to facilitate speed and effectiveness. The educational and institutional measurement and evaluation methods used digital technology to evaluate the educational institutes, teachers, and instructors. The samples of the evaluative innovation, such as the database for test question collection, registration through computer networks and internet, the use of CHART CARD for the educational institutional services, the use of computer in grading, etc.

5. The innovation in educational administration. The use of information technology in administration to facilitate speed and enhance the decision-making of the administrators. The innovation in educational administration related to the database management system in the educational offices. These were, for example: the database of students, teachers, and personnel in the institution; the database for the works of finance, accounting, general and educational supplies offices, etc. These data needed complete high security system and could link the data to other concerned offices outside, for instance the legal regulations and the legal documents concerning the National Education Acts. In order to achieve goals, the educational administrator should organize training for filing and designing programs for retrieving data effectively, promptly, and constantly. In some cases, the use of the programs could be integrated, therefore, it was recommended to develop the innovative programs that could be used in several related offices at the same time. The database development by the joint working group participants from concerning offices could establish an effective work performance.

### **Educational Management in the Disruptive Innovation Age**

Disruptive innovation was the result of the business competition that used the technology in creating innovative products to increase market share or establishing new market that could respond to the needs of the target groups. In this age, the word "Digital Disruption" or "Disruptive Technology" comes from the word "disrupt" which means "interrupt." The word often used in the context of "reformation" or doing something that causes the radical change by means of innovation usually of technology. The characteristics of disruption was to

substitute the old with the new which created the new demand immediately. This phenomenon was different from the transformation which emphasized on the development of the existing needs or to top-up from the old needs gradually.

The key factor in the disruptive change was the information technology which played the essential role in many sectors. The educational sector was also affected by this change. In managing modern teaching and learning, the teacher had to have knowledge and understand not only about the principles of teacher profession and about the content of the subject taught, they also had to have the knowledge about the tools used for acquiring knowledge to enhance skills, knowledge, experiences, and abilities for making analysis, and problem-solving which could yield maximum benefits to learners. Thus, the learning media ranging from for person media, materials, equipment, and instructional methods were the medium that enabled the learners to achieve their learning goals attainment easily and rapidly. Thus, the instructional media was necessary to facilitate the behavioral change of the learners in keeping with the learning goals. In this case, the teachers needed to select the instructional media that encouraged the learners to learn effectively. The teachers in the disruption age (Sommai Chanruang, B.E. 2523) needed to acquire knowledge as follows:

1. Modern technology acquisition and practicing to be able to use those technology for training or practicing.
2. Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI) should be used to motivate students to do self-directed learning. The CAI should be presented with letters, graphics or moving pictures to attract the learners' interest.
3. The teachers should know the body of knowledge of each field of study. They



also should be aware that the tools and equipment were only facilitated the learning. The learners should not be allowed to conduct independent study without the teacher's guidance.

4. The teachers should know how to use E-learning lessons, web-based learning or interactive board, or search data via internet.

5. In the case that the teachers could not gain experiences from those media, they should disrupt themselves and quit teaching career and seek other career that did not require the knowledge of the above mentioned information technology.

The teachers in the disruptive age, therefore, needed to use various strategies in the educational management process, especially, in expanding their views of the world by using the modern instructional media. They also needed to be considered how to use these media effectively and appropriately, either it was the information technology or other communication formats which could connect the world in such a short time. Although these new media formats had been valuable for learners in acquiring knowledge, skills, and experiences, the teachers were still be essential in guiding the correct and appropriate path and in selecting the instrumental media that provided maximum benefits in learning.

The administrators in the disruptive age

The administrators in the disruptive world needed to have the knowledge of information technology and of digital technology. Besides, they had to manage the effect of the technology in the educational institute management to use ICT effectively for the maximum benefits. Patcharaporn Duangchurn (B.E. 2561) stated the characteristics of the administrators in the disruptive age as follows:

1. Setting the direction for information technology and digital technology to be used in the educational institutes.

2. Managing the basic structures of hardware, software network and wire-free networks of the educational institution for teachers, instructors, personnel, and students to have access to technology and manage the resources conveniently and sufficiently.

3. Building the working culture and the environment in the educational institution to have information technology and digital technology for the the educational administration and allowing the students to have access to data sources via internet continuously.

4. Training and developing the personnel of the educational institution to gain the knowledge of information technology and digital technology continuously.

5. Setting good examples by acquiring and using IT and DT in working properly.

6. Inspiring the teachers, students and personnel in the educational institution to use IT and DT effectively according to the policy sitting.

In addition, the educational administrators in the disruptive age should have the management skills. That is to say, they should have the knowledge in management, skills in resource management of asset, raw materials, stock, including problem-solving techniques, and strategic planning. The administrators should possess conceptual, analytical, critical and synthetic thinking. They should extend their perspective to understand the bottom line problems or obstacles and search systematically and direct to the point for the solution. This was to prevent the loss of time and budget as a result of ineffective solution. The educational administrators of this age had to be professional administrators who

transform the perspective of educational administration applicable to the current volatile and ambiguity events. They, therefore, needed to set the educational administrative strategy that led to maximum capability and effectiveness.

Disruptive world was the unavoidable phenomenon that could occur in the organization. The access to the innovation and technology enhanced changes worldwide. The emergence of the wireless technology could reach each individual and enabled the individual to have connectivity worldwide. The number of connections via wireless technology were approximately close to the number of world population. Besides, the quality of personal mobile communication equipment had been rapidly increased. It could reached enormous numbers of people at the same time with high speed data and the growth had been going on continuously. Since the disruptive world was an unavoidable phenomenon, the educational administrators had to utilize these technology in their organization. They should be prepared, adjust the work performance, including the organizational management methods to catch up with the growth of the digital technology, the stakeholder needs, and the challenging innovation in the future. The educational leadership was an essential mechanism to lead the organization to overcome the barriers to reach the target of transforming the organizational management.

## Conclusion

At present, apart from the holistic approach in learning, the students had to keep pace with technology, which had more influences in the field of education. Students had to adapt themselves to the holistic learning approach which emphasized on self-actualization, building awareness, self-understanding, building physical, spiritual, and emotional

development, including developing arts and creative skills. The teachers should motivate and inspire students the thirst to learn, and encourage them to practise problem-solving by themselves. In addition, the teachers should be able to use instructional technology appropriately. It was noteworthy that each year there had been a large number of innovative educational technology to facilitate the learning. The transformation of technology in a quantum leap of growth was challenging. The educational management in the twenty-first century needed to elevate the quality of education and skills to break through the old frame of conventional education approach which focused on the classroom instruction and on teachers as the persons who transmitted knowledge to learners. Thus, the holistic learning approach was the essential mechanism to all sectors and it was necessary to use technology in teaching and instruction.

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