

Is education meaningful and holistic if it is alienated from human values?

It is a question that has countless answers: all in the negative! For example:

- 1) The broadcaster and environmentalist, David Attenborough, gained a degree in natural sciences in 1947 and went on to present programmes for BBC related to our natural world. But it was not until his later years that he began to understand the negative impacts that humans are having, resulting in the climate crisis. Attenborough's early works were meaningful in a narrow, naturalistic sense; they became more meaningful in a holistic sense when he was able to comprehend (and present) the broader view which included humans in the equation.
- 2) The former US President, Donald Trump, was impeached twice. He had a very narrow (and markedly uneducated) view of the world and the way it works. Even if the sentiment *was* sincere, *Make America Great Again* could never happen in isolation; it is a meaningless throw-away line if set in the context of global economics, the climate crisis and race relations. The Covid-19 pandemic is clear proof that, for ultimate survival, people and planet must combine in a holistic sense, which includes the four Es: Ecology, Economics, Equity and Ethics.
- 3) The young Swedish climate activist, Greta Thunberg, came out of the blue in 2018. Not true! Greta came out of a Swedish education system that is very environmentally focused. When she first started her school strike, she noted of her teachers: "As people, they think what I am doing is good, but as teachers, they say I should stop." ... a conundrum that pits long-term values against short-term gains. Greta displays a remarkable and very meaningful understanding of holistic planning for the future of our planet, which incorporates human values.
- 4) The historian and philosopher, Yuval Noah Harari, lists the three separate challenges to our future existence on Earth: *Nuclear War*, *Climate Change* and *Artificial Intelligence*. None of these can be viewed in isolation. He is quoted as saying: "History began when humans invented gods and will end when humans become gods," implying that human values will shape our response to each of the three challenges, in isolation, but also in a more holistic form. These thoughts should be incorporated into any meaningful education programme.

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