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**Holistic Education:
Its Character and Practice**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of**

**Master of Education
in
Adult Education**

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New Zealand.**

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Abstract

What does 'Holistic Education' mean? What part does it play in education? What does holistic education think and do? Could it be an effective approach to tertiary education? This study examines these questions, looking at definitions and discussions of holistic education in a review of international literature and identifying some principal themes and sub themes. Following this, is a brief review of four widely acknowledged foundational thinkers of modern holistic education, and a review of its practice in three well known schools.

The method used in this study was inductive, basing its conclusions on a literature review, rather than an empirical research. The purpose of the study was to discover, if possible, what holistic education is, where it began, and where it is going.

A major finding of this study is that there is no definitive set of guidelines for holistic educators. There are thousands of ideas of what holistic education is and what it is supposed to do. On the other hand, many holistic educators and theorists believe that the nature of holistic education is such that it cannot be and should not be formally defined. With such a range of subjective perceptions, one consequence is a perceptible gap between theory and practice. This indicates the need for further research in the area. Finally, the study questions the practicability of holistic approaches in contemporary university teaching and notes cultural, hierarchal and economic challenges to its successful introduction.

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