



# Rehumanizing Education: Embracing the Human Touch

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Received Date: June 10, 2024; Published Date: June 17, 2024

## Abstract

The landscape of education has been constantly evolving. The ever-changing world, especially highlighted by the challenges brought to the front during the COVID-19 pandemic, has emphasized the importance of technology. However, amidst this technological advancement, there is also a sect of educators like me who do not want to do away with the essence of human connection within the educational realm. Education can't be wholesome if there's no human connection between the students and the teachers, and among the students. To educate a student, one does not really just cater to the mind, but also to the values, belief system and emotions of the students.

**Keywords:** Education; Human; Values; Technology; Rehumanizing

## Introduction

### Importance of Rehumanizing Education

Human connection is extremely important in education, and has been emphasized by many philosophers and researchers alike. For example, the Steiner model has been sceptical of technology and has always put a lot of emphasis on holistic development. In this model, the focus on social futures rather than quick technological solutions further strengthens the importance of nurturing the human spirit along with intellectual growth. The integration of imagination, visualization, and social skills into teaching aligns with this philosophy, and further emphasizes the need for a balanced approach that values human connection above technological advancement [1]. According to Salazar M [2], educators like Paulo Freire (1972, 1984) have also focused on the concept of humanization in education. According to Freire, humans have an inherent instinct and capability towards personal fulfilment and growth, similar to the concept of self-actualization given by the Gestalt school. Freire believed that the goal is not just mere academic achievement but the holistic development of students as thinking, transformative beings.

The human connection between teachers and students forms an integral part of the education system. Lyle E and Caissie C [3] discuss how the human interaction and relationships form the very basis of education. Teaching is not just about dispensing information and knowledge in a robotic manner, but it is about creating a bond that helps the students learn life lessons, values and qualities that the teachers can imbibe in them through sharing experiences and adding a human touch to the whole academic dispersal.

It is very important that educators realize the relevance of offering the students unconditional regard, respect and a sense of understanding. When you create an inclusive atmosphere in the classroom, the students feel accepted, respected and valued. This helps them feel that they are a part of the education system, and ingrains in them the curiosity to learn more. When we make things more technological, and automated, it kills the essence of education.

### Technology and Rehumanizing

Technology is definitely an integral part of the education system today. However, it is also making us lose the essence

of the teacher-student bond, and student-student bonds. Technology is undoubtedly useful, but it does not in any way offer any emotional support to the students which is extremely necessary. Emotional intelligence, cultural intelligence and spiritual intelligence are concepts that have gained some relevance in the past years, and it is only through a holistic approach to education that we can foster these in our students. Students who have higher EQs will be able to resolve conflicts more peacefully and be more adept at dealing with unforeseen challenges. Imbibing in the students a sense of emotional resilience helps them become well-rounded individuals.

In essence, the human touch in education transcends the confines of technology, embodying the essence of what it means to truly educate a student. Educators need to remember that behind every lesson, every assignment, and every interaction, there's a profound opportunity to connect, inspire, and empower. As all of us navigate the complexities of modern education, we must always remember the transformative power of human connection in shaping minds, hearts, and futures. Cureton D, et al. [4] discuss how only 42% of students who took part in a poll, were satisfied that online learning had replaced face to face learning, whilst 33% were not at all satisfied with this change. They also discuss in a paper that an increasing body of research has put a lot of emphasis on the role of belongingness and social connection in undergraduate students' academic success. This research posits that relationships are very important in the development for a sense of belonging. The researchers also discuss that in Higher Education, the whole process of education is sadly becoming very automated.

The landscape of education is ever-evolving, and technological advancements are happening at a breath taking pace. But we need to stop getting into the trap of automation and digitization. Digital revolution is a part and parcel of the modern world, but it's crucial to recognize the timeless importance of human connection in the realm of learning. As an educator deeply passionate about fostering holistic growth in students, I firmly believe that nurturing human connections is imperative for students' overall personality development. There is danger in becoming overly reliant on technology. While technological advances, apps like ChatGPT, etc can efficiently deliver information, but they lack the empathetic understanding that only a human educator can provide.

### **Mental health and Rehumanizing**

Mental health issues have been on the increase, and according to Holmes K [5], there is a strong need for a pedagogy that emphasized care, love and compassion. I have been teaching college students for over six years now, and I have observed

that mental health issues are increasing with every new batch that I teach. It could be because of various reasons- spending more time online, social comparison due to constant use of social media, less socialization, not spending enough time outdoors, to name a few. Researchers have found that one of the main causes for depression is being lonely, isolated and having no social support. If people have good social and emotional support, they can get through the difficult times feeling less stressed out (Bulut, 2019). Anxiety and depression are usually exaggerated by lack of human connection and deeper meaning. Camangian and Cariaga (2021) discuss how the sense of identity is built in people based on how they interact with the world- which comprises parents, siblings, other people, elders, and the information that they receive from their peers, media, teachers, and others. And this feedback and the kind of interactions they have with the world helps their EQ, and also contributes towards their self-esteem and further strengthens their mental health.

### **Motivation to Learn and Rehumanizing**

One of the important changes that can be brought about in the current education system is adding a well thought of and a well-crafted curriculum that can help bring to the fore the humanizing of the educational process so that the schools become places of human development that focus on the overall, holistic development of students and pay a lot of attention to the emotional aspect and human connection [5]. A major aim of education is the ability to inspire and ignite curiosity among the students. And if the students feel a genuine connection with their teachers, they are more likely to be engaged and motivated to learn. A teacher who fosters a supportive and inclusive atmosphere cultivates a sense of belongingness, encouraging students to explore, question, and think critically. This personal connection helps students feel more at ease in the classroom, and they ask more questions without any fear of being judged or reprimanded.

Giles and Laurance [6] discuss how relationships are important to the educational experience. They say that people may not be consciously aware of it, but teacher-student relationships are an integral part of education. The students and teachers need to be in an interaction that is not forced, automated and artificial but natural, mutual and growth-oriented. Teachers are able to impart practical wisdom to the students by establishing these strong and healthy relationships, and make students become more motivated to learn. Also, human connection in education should extend beyond academics. It should encompass empathy, understanding, and the nurturing of essential human values. In a world where technological advancements often prioritize efficiency over empathy, the role of educators as mentors becomes even more significant. Educators need

to create a psychologically safe space in the classroom where students feel valued, and this further helps in the holistic development of the students.

## Conclusion

I firmly believe in the human aspect of education. Educators need to understand that technology can't act as a substitute for a good teacher. It may offer valuable apps and tools that help ease our workload and quicken the process of dispensing information, but it doesn't help in imparting knowledge and wisdom. We need to help our students become better people who are not just equipped with information, but also have the tact to use the information correctly. Correct and wise application of knowledge is what we need to teach our students. And this is something that only a good teacher can do. Only if we are able to command respect from our students, we can influence them for the better. And this respect is mutual, and for this to happen we must offer the students a safe, caring, non-judgemental environment in the classroom.

Educators need to embrace diversity in the classroom, respect and value each and every child, be good listeners, and become excellent mentors to the students. Students need to experience social interactions and human connection to learn better. Social development is an integral part of a child's life, and teachers play a very important role towards this. Also, the kind of interactions the students have with their peers in school also can impact their learning. In conclusion, I would like to affirm that human connection is very important in education. As educators, it is our responsibility to nurture

this connection, foster an environment where students feel understood, accepted, and inspired. By prioritizing human values and embracing the power of genuine relationships, we can empower students not only to excel academically but also to become compassionate, empathetic, and resilient individuals prepared to face and deal with the complexities of the world.

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