

Positive School Culture and Holistic Development of Students: A Socio-Emotional Perspective

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Abstract

School culture is a set of beliefs, norms, meanings and values among students, teachers, administration and the whole ecosystem of the school. As a part of society, the school also has a culture that is crucial in shaping the personality and holistic growth of students. In fact, a child's psychosocial and physical school environment, where he spends a significant part of his/her developmental year is pivotal for their overall well-being (psychosocial and emotional well-being). Several theories have also investigated the onset and emergence of morality during the early years. National Education Policy (NEP- 2020) emphasises the transmission of cultural practice in schools where the students get an opportunity to grow as a learner and develop as a fully functioning person thereby experiencing intellectual power, creativity, self-efficacy and mental well-being. This paper focuses on the role of school culture for the holistic development of students and provides an understanding of fundamental elements of school culture as highlighted by NEP-2020. Furthermore, this paper focuses on various socio-emotional strategies to foster a culture in the school ecosystem (school/classroom) that is in tune with the values and ethos of Indian society, thereby nurturing students physically and psychologically leading them to prepare themselves for life.

Keywords: School Culture, Health and Well-being, Socio-emotional, Holistic Development

1. Introduction

School is a place of education and potentially fosters cultural norms, values, beliefs, rituals and practices, food, apparel, linguistic and vernaculars etc. Schools, as part of the society, have a culture which plays a pivotal role in shaping students' personality and holistic development. In fact, the environment in which a child grows up and experiences in school, occupies a significant part of their early years of development, can either benefit or harm their holistic growth and general well-being (Reiss, 2013 & Clarke, T., 2022). Although, school culture and mental health are distinct terms but balance each other in developing a learning environment where students learn effectively and develop personally. A supportive and positive school environment or culture is linked to beneficial development in learners, successful efforts to prevent risks, and the promotion of overall health (Jessiman, et al., 2022). Evidence shows the way school culture changes are identified by students, parents and staff together impact student mental health (Weist, M. D. & Murray M., 2008 and Markham W.A. & Aveyard, P. A., 2003). Positive social and cultural aspects of school life engage students in active participation which is recognized as a building block for health and well-being of students (Meena, H. K. 2023).

The New Education Policy (2020) also emphasised on enabling positive school culture where the students learn and grow academically and attain holistic development during their school voyage. The 2020 National Education Policy in India is designed to ensure fair and accessible learning opportunities for every student. This policy addresses different facets of education and acknowledges the significance of students' mental health and overall well-being. Hence, it underscores the significance of integrating mental health learning and assistance into the educational structure/framework. Policy also advocates for the inclusion of mental health literacy within the school syllabus that can help students in understanding the value of mental health, identifying symptoms of mental health issues, and seeking assistance when necessary. In addition, the policy recalls the classical teaching-learning method practised in India for many years and its importance in the overall development of the student in the learning journey.

In Indian Culture, the age-old tradition of Guru-Shishya Parampara involves the passing down of wisdom and guidance from a Guru to a disciple, through the bond of spiritual connection and guidance. This tradition ensures that the teachings and knowledge of a Guru are passed on to their students. The gurukul system is considered as the epitome of ancient education in India having a unique system that shared the teachings of academics, moral values, physical and mental discipline. In gurukuls, pupils lived with their gurus having a close bond/relationship between them, which was considered vital for effective learning and holistic development of pupils.

The gurukul system also aimed to provide a well-rounded education to students, covering all aspects of life leading to holistic development. Moreover, the tradition of guru-shishya relationship was based on mutual trust and respect, and the guru imparted knowledge to the shishya through personal interactions leading to mental well-being and lifelong learning.

Likewise, the present educational policy, NEP 2020, also highlights the importance of individualised focus, moral/ethical principles, and hands-on abilities through advancements in science and technology. In doing this, a comprehensive educational framework can be established that equips learners for achievement in various areas of life while acquiring optimal health and well-being leading to holistic development in school life. Therefore, the current education system is also placing a greater emphasis on the importance of holistic development of students making them capable of handling the academic stress and pressure by developing a supportive, interaction, inclusive and resourceful school culture to foster the overall development of students in school years.

Hence, this research aims to explore the importance of positive school culture in schools and highlight its connections with the holistic development in terms of health and well-being of students in schools.

2. Objectives

- Highlight the importance of positive school culture practices in schools
- Explore the linkages of positive school culture in promoting holistic development of students in terms of well-being (psychological, emotional and social well-being).
- Promote and enable positive school culture to establish mental health and well-being of the learners at schools to achieve goals of NEP-2020.

3. Methodology

The current study followed a qualitative approach to achieve the objectives of this study. The research articles on school culture and health and well-being were searched and studied. Literature was searched using the key words positive school culture, health and well-being, holistic development of students using the following databases: Google Scholar, ResearchGate, Semantic Scholar, Frontiers, PubMed, Academia etc. for relevant literature review.

4. Background and development

4.1 Conceptualisation of Positive School Culture

The concept of school culture is among the most intricate and significant ideas in the field of education. When it comes to enhancing schools, it has also been overlooked. School culture can be described as the deeper, unconscious fundamental beliefs and shared assumptions that shape the self-perception of students, teachers, counsellors, principals, staff etc. (Schein, E.H., 1985). These components are the foundation of the school's atmosphere and significantly contribute to creating a conducive learning setting while making sure that students are not afraid, involved and enthusiastic leading to fostering attitudes like curiosity, academic growth and success in various spheres of life.

School culture is a major factor in shaping the values and attitudes of students which are key educational objectives of any school. From a socio-emotional perspective, the theories of Lawrence Kohlberg and Carol Gilligan offer valuable understanding into overall development and how it can be nurtured among students within a school setting. Kohlberg's theory of moral development provides a framework for understanding how students' moral reasoning and understanding evolves through different stages. According to the theory, individuals progress through three stages: pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional. At a pre-conventional level, moral decisions are driven by the desire to avoid punishment and to gain rewards, while at conventional level, where it is expected of them to adhere to societal norms and laws. At conventional level, proper conduct involves fulfilling one's responsibilities, demonstrating respect for those in power, and upholding the established social structure. Eventually, they may reach the postconventional level, where the child defines what is right based on universal ethical principles and the greater good. These are universal principles of justice, reciprocity and equality of human rights and respect for dignity of human beings as individual persons (Kohlberg, 1984; Puka, 2017).

In a school setting, teachers and teacher educators can leverage Kohlberg's through discussions about ethical dilemmas and promoting a fair and just environment leading to mental health and well-being leading to personal growth, autonomy, purpose in life etc. By addressing moral issues and fostering a sense of fairness and equality students can develop higher levels of moral reasoning and an appreciation for societal rules which gives them a sense of belongingness to the community, society, groups etc. Furthermore, Carol Gilligan's critique of Kohlberg familiarised the ethics of care which focuses on the importance of relationships and compassion in moral reasoning. Gilligan argued that Kohlberg's focus on justice overlooked the relational aspects of ethical decision-making. Her framework suggests that individuals first focus on self-care and then on caring for others, eventually striving to balance both. In educational settings, Gilligan's approach can be applied by fostering empathy and strong interpersonal relationships (Gilligan, 1981,1988).

Both the theories offer a framework through which schools can create a more holistic and positive culture. This includes development of moral reasoning through structured ethical discussions while simultaneously promoting empathy and supportive relationships. Schools can model ethical behaviour and create spaces for open dialogue about moral issues,

helping students navigate both societal norms and personal connections. Combination of both approaches supports a nurturing environment where students are given enough scope to grow both intellectually and emotionally, ultimately contributing to a positive and inclusive school culture (Kumar, 2015). In addition, several educational groups, such as the National Centre for School Climate, have provided comprehensive descriptions of positive school cultures and techniques/ways for strengthening school culture to nurture learners' abilities, skill and well-being (Verma, V., 2021). In a positive school culture students feel valued, cared for and respected, which lead to a sense of belongingness, enhance engagement and encourage students both inside and outside of the classroom fostering high-quality education and holistic growth of students (Phillips, G. & Charles, M., 1994).

Therefore, to meet the targets of New Education Policy 2020, the positive school's culture needs to be intentionally developed to address diversities in terms of language, belief, customs and ethnicities of students. Furthermore, it is essential to help students develop values and dispositions required for having pride and connectedness with their local traditions and knowledge systems while being simultaneously open to welcoming and promoting mutual trust, respect for diverse backgrounds, as a comprehensive citizen. National educational policy states that "All participants in the school education system, including teachers, principals, administrators, counsellors, and students, will be sensitised to the requirements of all students, the notions of inclusion and equity, and the respect, dignity, and privacy of all persons. Such an educational culture will provide the best pathway to help students become empowered individuals who, in turn, will enable society to transform into one that is responsible towards its most vulnerable citizens (section 6.19)"

The essence of school culture can be understood through its underlying values, beliefs, established ethics and principles. These experienced cultural elements are expressed through actions, interactions, conduct, and routines by the students, teachers, administration, counsellors etc. In NCFSE-2023, these essential fundamentals are largely in the following three groups:

4.1.1 Relationships: This pertains to the interactions among the school's teachers, pupils, and others involved such as principals, counsellors etc. For instance, if educators attentively listen to students and show concern for their physical and emotional health; if teachers work together to offer a more comprehensive experience for the students; and if the school embraces parents and guarantees their involvement in the educational journey are all elements of positive and nurturing relationships.

4.1.2 Symbols: These apply to different types of visual presentations present in schools. For instance, the inscriptions on the walls of schools, along with the artwork and murals along the corridors, convey the values appreciated by the schools.

4.1.3 Arrangements and Practices: This refers to setups – such as seating arrangements – and activities – like which sports involve which students – connected to different academic and school procedures that indicate the type of culture the school promotes.

4.2 Holistic Development (Mental health and psycho-social-emotional well-being)

Mental health and well-being is a complex term and includes both the assets and liabilities. Assets are attitudes, beliefs, aspirations, skills, and achievements which contribute to a sense of well-being as enhance positive affect and reduce negative affect which support progress towards realising one's fullest potentialities (Cacioppo and Bernston, 1999). On the other side, liabilities are pressures/threats to emotional security which impede the attainment of needed satisfaction and purpose of life. Therefore, to achieve positive mental health and well-being, there is a need to increase assets of mental health and well-being and minimise the potential threats. In students' lives, schools also play a pivotal role in the development of cognitive, social, emotional and behavioural domains which are the indicators of mental health and well-being. Thus, schools need to develop the positive school culture to grow and nurture the developmental domains leading to experience of psychological, emotional and social well-being thereby enhancing the cognitive-emotional functioning, adaptation, social participation, interpersonal skills, personal relationships and coping with stressors in life. Hence, Mental health is the emotional, psychological, and social state of a person, and holds equal significance to physical health. Efforts towards care and handling of mental health have grown significantly in modern times. As the occurrence of mental health issues has increased manifold, school students must get sufficient assistance and care to control their mental well-being. The components taken up in this study are as follows:

4.2.1 Psychological well-being- the term psychological well-being has been defined in many forms by researchers however in general psychological well-being is considered as a state of mind in which an individual is able to develop their potential, work productively and creatively, and is able to cope with the normal stresses of life (WHO, 2021). This concept emphasises how psychological well-being is multifaceted, encompassing positive emotions, psychological functioning, and a feeling of meaning and purpose in life.

4.2.2 Social Well-being is a sense of belongingness to a community, society or group which helps in creating and maintaining healthy and reciprocal associations that support in difficult times, increasing our resilience and ability to cope with life's challenges.

4.2.3 Emotional Well-being- Emotional well-being refers to being content with life in general, feeling joy, love, or compassion, and experiencing happiness. Emotional well-being involves the capacity to generate positive emotions, moods, and thoughts, and to adjust when facing challenges and stressful circumstances. At its core, emotional well-being is about being in harmony with your body's emotional and vulnerable states.

The 2020 Education Policy recognizes significance of mental health in holistic development and emphasises the need for a thorough educational approach that includes academic growth while attaining psycho-social-emotional well-being. The policy states that psycho-social-emotional well-being are crucial components of comprehensive development, and educational institutions should integrate them into their instructional methods and the general atmosphere of learning. The policy states "The development of capacities that promote student wellness such as fitness, good health, psycho-social well-being and sound ethical grounding are also critical for high-quality learning". The policy also emphasises on "basic training in health, including preventive health, mental health, good nutrition, personal and public hygiene, disaster response and first-aid will also be included in the curriculum, as well as scientific explanations of the detrimental and damaging effects of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs" (NEP-2020). Children are unable to learn optimally when they are undernourished or ill. Hence, the nutrition and health (including mental health) of children will be addressed through healthy meals and the introduction of well-trained social workers, counsellors, and community involvement into the schooling system [NEP 2020, 2.9]

4.3 Linkages between School Culture and Mental Health and Well-being leading to Holistic Development

The NEP-2020 states the importance of including a holistic set of strategies to ensure students' overall development, describing both mental health and emotional well-being as integral parts of the educational process. "Schools could enhance the mental health of young people through creating a school climate that students view as positive, including positive peer relationships, caring and respectful adults, and effective school leadership and involvement" (Hinze et al., 2023). Influence can be direct or indirect, such as through the school community, leadership (school features), and school context. A little elaboration, however, has been provided on how to teach the same in the new education policy, 2020. This paper explores the importance, relevance, and methods of building and maintaining mental health and well-being in the context of school culture. The below shows the relationships of various components of school culture and mental health of students.

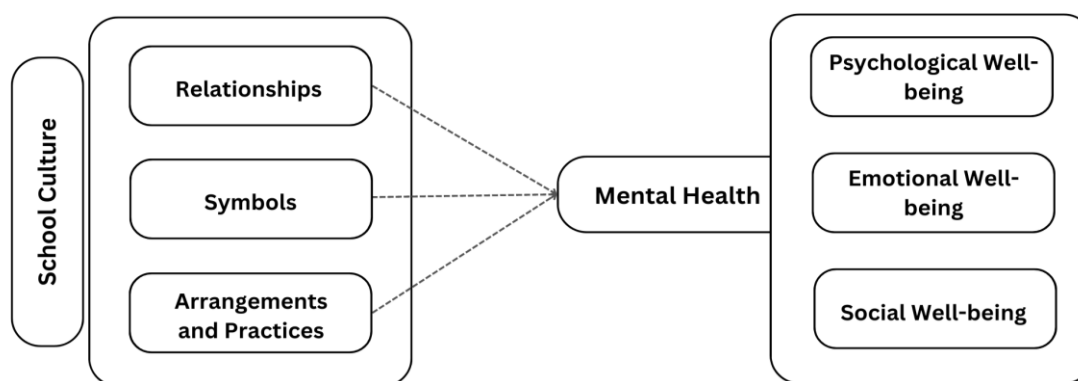


Fig 1: Relationship of Cultural elements and holistic development

The dynamics of school culture and components of holistic student well-being can be understood in the following ways:

4.3.1 Relationships and mental health and well-being: Positive and supportive relationships help endure and cure issues faced by stakeholders of the school environment. For students, a majority of their lives are spent in schools, and for adolescents, most of it is spent in the turmoil of rapid socio-emotional changes. Relationships that are non-directive, empathic, warm, and encourage thinking and learning have correlations with the following: increased participation, critical thinking, student satisfaction, perceived and actual achievement, self-esteem, positive motivation, social connection, and attendance (Roffey, 2012). Healthy relationships with peers and teachers develop a trusting and growth-

oriented environment, necessary for the overall development of the students and the school alike, ensuring that students are heard, seen as well as respected by their peers and teachers generating a sense of contentment and self accomplishment. Moreover, the nature of interactions between students and staff highly influences mental-health and well-being (Jessiman et al., 2022). Additionally, positive relationships among students, peers, teachers, school administration and staff act as a buffer against childhood adversities and as a protective factor against traumatic events in students life (Scheuplein, 2022 and Sokol, 2021).

4.3.2. Symbols and Mental Health and Well-being: Logos, murals, classroom names, etc. are all part of the physical environment and represent the school's values, ideas, and beliefs. It ensures the unity of meanings (Ozoglu & Turan, 2015) and the schematic structure of working in that particular school. Symbols serve as powerful indicators that enhance safety, facilitate communication, foster a welcoming atmosphere, and educate and direct a person about the values, beliefs, and principles that a school adheres to. Indeed, using symbols to represent intricate systems, like a daily schedule, lessens the cognitive load and, especially, helps with tackling challenging assignments that often cause stress among students, which are easily understood through symbols. Using visuals is particularly advantageous for kids with cognitive challenges and encourages inclusivity within educational settings. A school with weak symbols, values, and rituals often lacks harmony in its functioning. A study conducted by Ozdilekleret et al. reported that "40% of the directors, 19% of the teachers, and 67% of the servants believe that school culture contributes to social—organisational—individual development, performance, and academic success", making it an essential element of the academic environment and holistic development of the learners. It is suggested that schools should be able to symbolise joy and pride, making it an important element of positive school culture for nurturing health and well-being of students (Terrance and Peterson, 1999). Hence, symbolization is part of the immediate environment in a school and is recognized as an integral part of it, as well as oneself for the overall development of students..

4.3.3 Practices and Arrangements and Mental Health and Well-being: What a school is like on a day-to-day basis forms the foundation of many positive behavioural and academic outcomes. Conducting a regular and meaningful morning assembly, regular PT classes, mid-day meal menus, and classroom practices ensure uniformity among students and can aid in promoting mental health and well-being leading to holistic development of the students.

Certain classroom practices such as seating arrangement, learning resources, student ownership and responsibility of learning, cleanliness and more to promote certain values. The seating arrangement has been found to work differently in varied contexts of the nature of interaction. For every day and specific contexts, seating arrangements can vary from individual or shared, rows or circular etc. A review study on different forms of classroom seating arrangements indicated that for an interactive context, closer seating arrangements work best whilst, for individual performance, rows work best in reducing disruptive behaviour (Wannarka and Ruhl, 2008). Besides that, classroom cleanliness is another important element of school culture, one that defines how much the school cares for students' physical health as well. Clean classrooms impact a classroom's attendance, sum mood, willingness to learn, interaction and responsibility. It is quite common in Japanese culture for students to be in charge of cleaning their school. This not only inculcates a sense of responsibility but also a routine, making it an important part of school culture and further students recognises the significance of its relationship with mental hygiene and wellbeing.

Furthermore, practices of school assembly- a regular anecdote, skits, speeches, prayers and quotes not only create an environment appreciative of interaction but also one in which every student can participate once. Being part of an event bigger than themselves fosters a sense of responsibility and confidence. Assemblies can be utilised, holding talks or skits on topics such as mental health issues, its management, and good touch - bad touch etc. Whether the students actively listen to it or not, unconscious learning always takes place. However, active engagement can bring long-lasting behavioural changes that benefit their well-being and that of their peers. Organising and taking part in various functions and events such as annual day, sports day etc. either as participants or audience is another useful practice when fostering mental health. For instance, a study indicated that merely watching sports had positive outcomes as such - Watching live sport of all types provides many opportunities for social interaction and this helps to forge group identity and belonging, which in turn mitigates loneliness and boosts levels of well-being (Keyes, et al., 2023). Evidence shows that attending live sport events have positive associations with aspects of mental health well-being, "Live sporting events (LSEs) attendance has positive associations with some aspects of subjective wellbeing (life satisfaction and a sense of life being worthwhile)" and reduces feelings of loneliness. Other important practices include meal-time, parent-teacher meetings (PTMs), workshops, counselling sessions, psychological assessment screenings etc. Such practices send a non-verbal message both to the staff and the students, that they are cared for.

4.4 Key provisions as per NEP 2020 regarding holistic development of students:

4.4.1 Literacy, a bridge from misery to hope: Destigmatizing is the first step in creating awareness about mental health in schools. If teachers, students, and other authorities do not identify the school as a safe environment to share about mental health, then little to nothing can be done for those who are struggling with it. Stigma is better manageable if students create a common understanding that many mental health issues are treatable and do not necessarily lead to the worst outcome. An effective way to strike the logical young minds is to provide information on reasons that develop into mental health and well-being issues, how they can be countered, and what role peers play in this process of healing. Sensitization programs and making mental health an exclusive part of the curricula are necessary to provide a safe environment for the above discussions. Students may even be given homework or tasks to do, which will improve their skills at facing emotional dilemmas, their feelings, their symptoms, and management. Stories of those who have successfully dealt with MH issues, especially those of their peer group, create a closer sense of identification. These provisions will yield better results if they are interactive and inculcate increased participation.

4.4.2 Counselling services in school culture: Counselling helps students change maladaptive and unhealthy behavioural manifestations into adaptive and healthy ones. Build time management and organisational skills by establishing clear academic goals, resolving interpersonal problems, fostering positive group behaviour, conflict resolution, enhancing self-esteem and working through personal problems that cause emotional distress. School counsellors are best suited to identify and provide support to those who may need specialised help. Counsellors can run regular assessments and provide individual or group counselling. Providing intervention programs may include dealing with peer issues, and psychosocial problems, collaborating with parents, and working with teachers.

4.4.3 Mental Health Curricula: Mental health curricula in the form of “Happiness Curriculum” applied in Delhi and Uttarakhand schools aim to improve students’ mental health by fostering relationship-building, critical thinking, mindfulness, and problem-solving skills. By encouraging mental health professionals to lead mental health education sessions in a classroom setting, a mental health curriculum for schools can aid in closing the knowledge and resource gap between children and mental health professionals. In 2020, Minds Matter, a progressive mental health curriculum for schools, was introduced throughout India with this in mind. The curriculum for mental health shows a step-by-step comprehension of mental health and wellness and defines success in terms of behavioural modifications.

4.4.4 Inclusivity for special needs students: NEP 2020 recognises various kinds of special needs and now covers learning disabilities, focusing on provisions for training the teachers to identify them in a classroom setup.

4.4.5 MH capacity building: The curriculum will also educate students on the harmful effects of substance, its use and abuse and provide basic training in health, including preventive health, mental health, good nutrition, personal and public hygiene, disaster response, and first-aid" (NEP-2020). In order to improve educators’ knowledge and abilities, the Central Board of Secondary Education has created numerous Capacity Building programs (CBPs) for counsellors as well as teachers. According to Kiran (2015), these programs aid in the development of psychosocial competencies such as leadership, responsibility, communication, intellectual capacity, self-esteem, interpersonal skill, etc.

NEP 2020 is a great initiative in the direction of transformation of schooling systems all over India. Several of its provisions were being implemented in bits and pieces but now can be used in uniformity, giving larger and comparable feedback on its efficiency. Some suggestions, after careful review of various programs in India and around the world have been given as follows:

1. **Promoting mindfulness:** Mindfulness is the practice of bringing one’s attention to the present. It is a way of living, one which involves attention to the work at hand (mindful living). Mindfulness has proven to be very efficient in reducing the symptoms of anxiety, depression and negative coping behaviour, whilst promoting a more aware implementation of skills and practices (Parker, 2014 et al.; Johnstone, 2020 et al.; Sibinga, 2016 et al.). Students, especially, can benefit from mindfulness classes. However, care is needed when inculcating a mindful approach. It is a complex concept that needs translation into simpler and accurate terms for the students. Mindfulness can best be learned with the help of a trained professional.

2. **Promoting SEL:** “Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions” (*Fundamentals of SEL - CASEL*, 2024). It is an intersectional approach that does not focus on development in academics but rather on real-life situations and issues. Learnings can be of various types, ranging from single sessions to multiple regular ones (twice a week), they may focus on topics such as - “Recognizing thoughts, Understanding feelings, Decision-making and problem-solving and healthy relationships”

(DASH, 2023). National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 included SEL as a key tool in aiding the education system to “develop good human beings capable of rational thought and action, possessing compassion and empathy”. Although SEL efforts have gained momentum, especially after COVID-19, this interactional and holistic approach has yet to achieve a larger-scale application.

The degree of support varies with the dysfunctionality experienced by the students. This should be kept in mind when formulating mental health programs for larger groups of students or individualised educational programs for those with particular academic deficits. A school climate (entire school community) of positive social interactions is thus an important factor in the identification, maintenance and holistic development of students. As mentioned before, a school culture is one where everybody has a stake in everybody’s mental health and “Social ties can instil a sense of responsibility and concern for others that then lead individuals to engage in behaviours that protect the health of others, as well as their health” (Umber & Montez, 2010).

3. Relationship-building programs: A process of identifying, understanding and learning to make relationships is a complex one, more so for students. Several classroom and outdoor activities help in adding this skill to students' skills. For the teacher, it's important to begin with creating a safe environment and building a rapport. One way to establish a quick and strong rapport is to be aware of and respect the generational norm. To show students that they will be given unconditional positive regard because the one in authority is comfortable with their present new world. Another is to be authentic in instructions, questions and answers. Teachers can be honest in their awareness and expression of negative emotions like frustration, sadness, disappointment, etc. Rogers stated that for effective therapy, the therapists themselves should be authentic/confident, provide unconditional positive regard and be empathetic. Care is essential when modelling a behaviour or emotion. He referred to them as ‘facilitative conditions’. The same is true for a classroom setting. The first relationship to build in the process of learning to do so is the one with the teacher, then peers and most importantly family members.

4. Inclusivity for Cognitive deficits: Although NEP 2020 referred to learning difficulties, no mention is of various signs and symptoms to look out for in a school context. Several diagnosable learning disorders such as autism spectrum disorder, intellectual disability, specific learning disorders (dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia & dyspraxia etc.) and other developmental disorders have been left behind. Sensitisation of parents and teachers both is necessary to identify them and provide appropriate educational modifications. For instance, students with SLD have the facility to exempt certain subjects, while other disorders may be given leniency in attendance. These students also have a provision for certification which grants them concessions, quota and care facilities in later adulthood.

Conclusion

In the context of changing social fabrics of India and India’s National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, fostering a positive school culture is vital for the holistic development of students. Drawing from the socio-emotional perspectives of Lawrence Kohlberg and Carol Gilligan, it becomes evident that moral and ethical education must be integrated with emotional intelligence and care-based values to provide a well-rounded educational experience. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive framework for nurturing both the cognitive and affective dimensions of student development leading to holistic development of students.

To create an inclusive and supportive school environment, students need to be encouraged to participate in democratic processes, engage in ethical reasoning, and develop strong interpersonal relationships. Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs play a crucial role in this, teaching students essential skills such as empathy, conflict resolution, and emotional regulation thereby strengthening their emotional and social well-being while learning. Furthermore, NEP 2020’s emphasis on experiential learning, holistic education, and the integration of co-curricular activities aligns well with these socio-emotional perspectives. By promoting collaborative learning, community involvement, and student well-being, schools can create a culture that values both academic excellence and personal growth.

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