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Social emotional learning: Policy initiatives and classroom practices

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Abstract---Understanding the need of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) for success of students in schools and life, SEL programs have taken focus of Policy makers and educationists throughout the world. Lot of work is being done for SEL of students in developed countries, but in India designing special programs for developing SEL is at back foot. Some private schools, which charge heavy fees may be working for SEL development of students by hiring some agencies or NGOs. Authors are interested to know about the status of government schools, which cater more than 50% of population, what steps are being taken by government for SEL of students studying in Government schools. The best way to know about Government intervention for SEL is to go through various policies and programs being run in India by Government, related to education. In this context, we first analyzed National Educational Policy NEP2020. It says that for holistic development of students, social emotional learning is mandatory. SEL is not only important for students, but for educators also, so teachers' trainings must have component of SEL. Authors have gone through integrated teachers' training program NISHTHA, a national level program by NCERT. NISHTHA training module include one module having title "Developing Social-Personal Qualities for creating Safe and Healthy School Environment". Samagra Shiksha is an integrated school education program by Government of India for quality education for all (class 1 to 12). Ongoing through its objectives, it was observed that objectives of Samagra Shiksha emphasizes on Gender Equity, Inclusive education, Quality and Innovation etc. all these topics lead toward development of SEL of Students. Happiness curriculum has been introduced by Delhi Government in schools in 2018. School Health program has been started by Ayushman Bharat for school students. Among the objectives of this program, one objective is to promote healthy behavior of children which they will inculcate for better life. ATAL

Tinkering Labs are being established in schools under ATAL Innovation Mission by NITI Ayog. ATIs mission is also to develop Social-Emotional Learning of students. It may be concluded that some initiatives are being taken policy makers for SEL of students, but much more is needed. After covid 19, the significance of SEL is further intensified. Our policy makers are paying due attention on this topic, but challenge is implementation of program. To achieve desired results, capacity building of teachers is most important factor. A self-motivated teacher, who is well aware of importance of SEL in life can inculcate these skills among students.

Keywords---social emotional learning, STEM, NEP 2020, NISHTHA.

Introduction

Education entails acquiring knowledge to have a greater understanding of the various disciplines that will be used in our daily life, it is the foundation for development of a healthy individual and robust society. Our education system focus on making good engineers, doctors, scientists and other professionals, but do not ensure that values like honesty and accountability are also inculcated in them. Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) a crucial dimension of child development has remained largely ignored in Indian Education system. Some private organization or NGOs are working on developing programs to enhance SEL of students. Some private schools, charging hefty fees may collaborate with private organization and work on Social Emotional Learning of students. However, SEL is an educational movement that is taking importance throughout the world. In India lot of work needs to be done for SEL, especially for students in Government schools.

What is SEL?

SEL can be defined as capability to know and handle emotions, solve problems effectively and maintain positive relationships with others. Researches have shown positive effects of SEL in improving students' development in healthy way as well as in academic achievement. India has recently seen a diverge range of stakeholders – from researchers and educators to employers and parents- all have learnt the importance of social emotional learning and non-academic skills in the lives of young people. With covid-19 situations, we saw that children, young & adults have increased level of stress, anxiety and depression across the globe. This has further high lightened the importance of SEL. To have knowledge of Social Emotional skills is must for everyone for leading a happy and responsible life. Collaborative of Academic, Social Emotional learning (CASEL) has said that those skills are which are required by all for successful use of knowledge, attitude and skills to control emotions, to take better decision and to establish and attain positive goals are SEL. Students will be able to acquire and convey empathy. According to CASEL five core competencies taught to students under SEL are: Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, Building relationships, Responsible Decision making. Social Emotional skills can be considered as habit of handling one's emotions that allow a student to have good association with

everyone. Curriculum of school should be designed with intention that there is improvement of both cognitive skills, social-emotional and physical skills of students. Teachers should also be aware about the importance of SEL, if educators are not familiar with Social Emotional skills, they will not be able to inculcate these skills among students. Therefore, teachers' training programs must focus on building capacities of teachers on social emotional skills, only then teachers will be able to handle their emotion and be able to guide students how to deal with stress in day-to-day life.

Through this paper authors are analysing various policies and programs that are being developed/conducted by Government of India in the field of education. In this paper discussion will be on National Education Policy 2020, NISHTHA integrated teacher training program, Samagra Shiksha, Happiness Program of Delhi Government and Health & Wellbeing Program of Ayushman Bharat etc.

National Education Policy 2020: Vision for an overhaul

National Education Policy 2020 (NEP2020) has been approved by the union cabinet of India on 29th July 2020, which replaced the previous NEP1986. NEP 2020 focuses on development of 21st century skills among students. The aim of education must be to develop good citizens who have rational and creative thinking, possess compassion, empathy, courage and scientific temperament with sound ethical values. NEP2020 focuses on developing citizens who are attached, fruitful and add contribution in making an unbiased and inclusive society as suggested in our constitution.

An educational institution should be such that in which every student feels welcomed and cared for, where a safe and harmonious learning environment exists, where different learning experiences are provided and where physical infrastructure is very good. The aim of every educational institute should be to have all these characteristics.

Among the fundamental principles that will guide the education system at large, some of the principles that indicate on development of SEL are:

- NEP 2020 emphasizes on development of ethics, human & Constitutional values like respect for others, politeness, democratic spirit, urge to do service, care for public property, scientific temper, independence, commitment, pluralism, fairness in life and also skills like communication, collaboration, teamwork and problem solving etc.
- NEP2020 focuses on holistic development of learners, it says all reforms in education that is in the curriculum and pedagogy for all stages will be based on understanding and away from rote learning. Education should be such that it connects the child to real life situation. Students to remain away from the rote learning as most of schools/ children follow this practice. Cognitive development is not the only aim of education, but building character and holistic development of a child who is and well-equipped with the 21st century skills is also part of education"
- NEP2020 also says that popular pedagogy will be
- Experiential learning including hands-on learning

- art-integrated
- sports-integrated education,
- story-telling- based pedagogy

As per NEP 2020 the importance of “doing what’s right” will be taught to children during initial stage of development and will be given the logical thinking for making ethical decisions. In higher classes value education may be imparted on themes like cheating, violence, plagiarism, littering, tolerance, equality, empathy etc. The purpose of value education is that students develop ethical behavior in their daily life and use ethical practices in all work.

Education policy guides the Curriculum framework, which help in developing school curriculum and syllabus. As policy emphasizes on development of moral, ethical values among students, it is expected that new curriculum framework developed on the basis of NEP2020 will focus on developing Social Emotional learning of student. Policy further gives importance to Experiential learning, Art-integrated learning, Sports-integrated learning and story-telling pedagogy for students. All these activities and pedagogy promote team spirit, communication, collaboration will automatically lead to promote SEL of students. For social-emotional skills of teachers, policy talk about to ensure that school to have positive environment so that learning is a joyful process in which all stakeholders are benefited and a harmonious culture is developed.

NISHTHA -National Initiative for School Heads and Teachers’ Holistic Advancement

Teachers play important role in skill development of students. Teachers should be aware of Social emotional skills and are familiar how to impart these skills among students. Author gone through NISHTHA training program to know the status. This is the largest teacher training program of its kind in the world, stated in August 2019 in physical form. But due to Covid 19 situation, it was made available to teachers online. NISHTHA courses are for all stages of school teachers.

NISHTHA 1.0 for Elementary Teachers

NISHTHA 2.0 for Secondary Teachers

NISHTHA 3.0 for Foundation Literacy and Numeracy for Pre-Primary Teachers.

Teachers are the power house of nation, they are future builders. The main objective of this massive training program is to motivate teachers to encourage and foster critical thinking, equip with 21st century skills. NISHTHA trainings have 12 to18 modules which develop teachers’ skill on competency-based learning.



Fig. 1 Focus areas for NISHTHA project

This integrated training program aims to build capacity of about 90 lakhs of pre-primary, elementary, secondary, senior secondary teachers and school heads from whole country. It is topic of research to know if teacher trainings focus on Social-Emotional learning of teachers and students as it is one of the important life skills for better adjustment in society and success in life.

After going through NISHTHA training modules and on interaction with teachers, it is revealed that all modules are activity based which include educational games, quizzes, social emotional skills, motivational interaction, team building preparation, school-based assessments, in-built continuous feedback mechanism. In addition to this, there is one course in NISHTHA training dedicated for SEL. The module “Developing Social-Personal Qualities and creating Safe and Healthy School Environment”.

The objectives of this course are

1. Build teachers’ capacity about personal social qualities.
2. 2.For development of social personal qualities of teachers and students.
3. 3.Develop guidance skills of teachers to help students in class-room.
4. 4.Generate an environment in school/class-rooms where there is acceptance for everyone, all students are confident and take care of each other well-being.

The objectives of this module clearly shows that NCERT while developing NISHTHA training courses have taken into consideration Social-Emotional Skills. Through teachers these skills are being inculcated among students. It can be expected that in coming years teachers will work on development of SEL among students. Researches have shown that students having strong SEL are better adjusted in daily life and have better learning outcomes.

Samagra Shiksha & SEL

It was decided in Union budget 2018 that School Education would be treated holistically without segmentation into primary and secondary education. So, the integrated school education program called Samagrashiksha has been launched instead of Sarv Shiksha abhiyan (SSA for Elementary Education) and Rastriya Madhyamic Shiksha Abhiyan (RAMSA for secondary education). It is in accordance with SDG4 quality education for all. This scheme has to implement RTE 2009 and also aligned with recommendation of NEP-2020 to provide quality education to everyone with equitable and inclusive classroom environment. Education should be imparted to children, keeping in mind diverse background, multilingual, different academic abilities of students and should provide them opportunities where everyone participate in learning process. The centrally sponsored scheme- Samagra Shiksha scheme, has been approved by the cabinet committee on economic affairs to integrate school education scheme from 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2026 with estimated outlay of Rs. 294283.04 Crore.

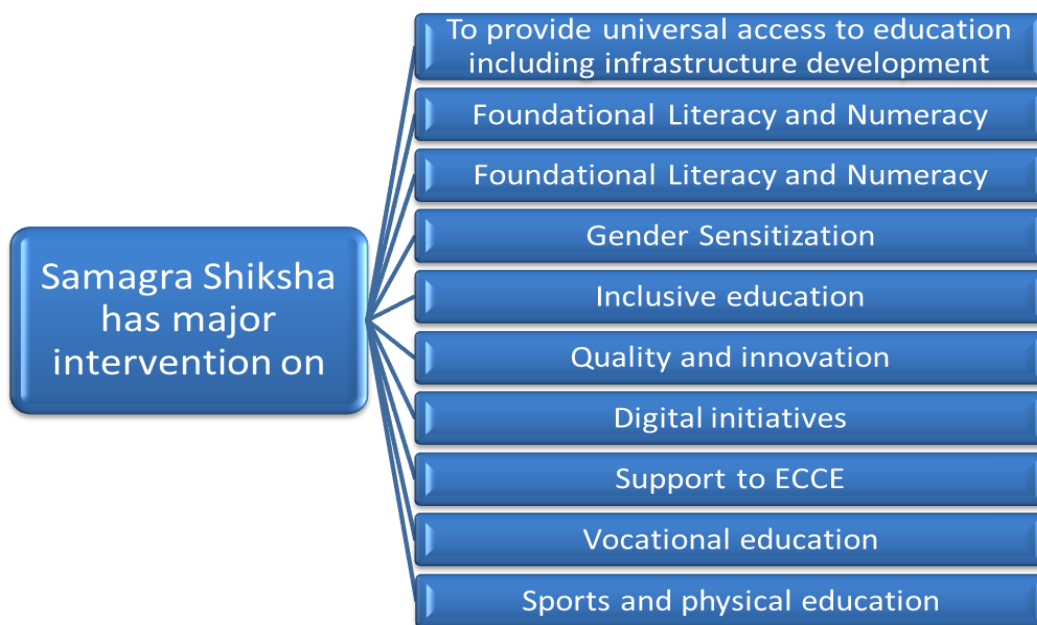


Fig. 2 Objectives of Samagra Shiksha Scheme

Although social emotional learning of students is not the part of Samagra Shiksha objective but all objectives lead for SEL of students, which may be inclusive education, Gender Equity and vocational education or holistic approach to

education and focus on quality education. Purpose of education is to develop a responsible, well aware youth. Such person should be physically, mentally, socially and emotionally strong. Samagra Shiksha focus on all aspects of child development however there is no separate program for social emotional learning of students.

Happiness Curriculum of Delhi Government

Delhi Government has introduced Happiness curriculum for children studying in Nursery to grade 8 in schools run by Government of Delhi since July 2018. The purpose of this program is to have better mental health of students. In this program various skills taught are:

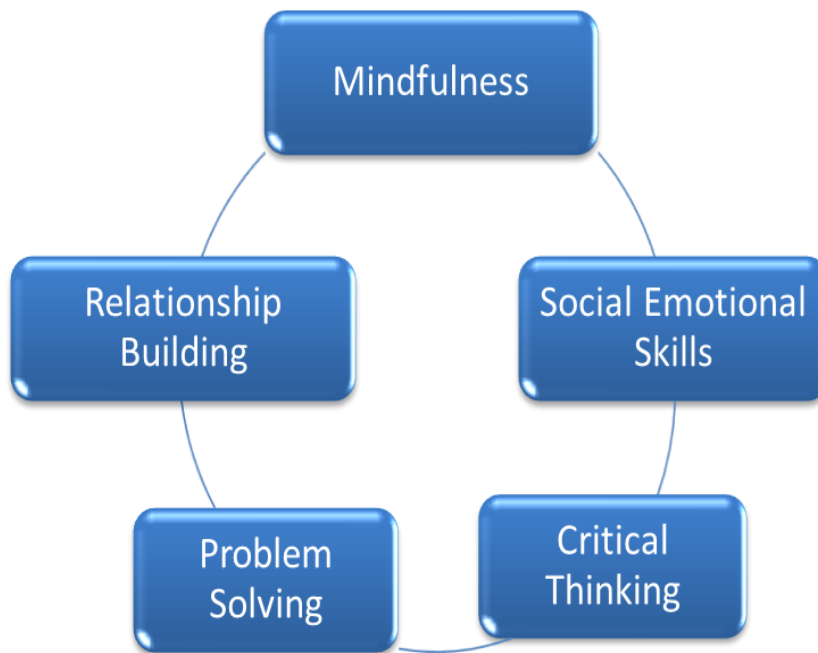


Fig. 3 Pillars of Happiness Curriculum of Delhi Government

The reason behind starting this program is that everywhere in the world, focus is on acquiring knowledge in mathematics, science, geography and languages, but no attention is paid on developing educated person who will be a responsible, happy person and who has risen above all evils of society. In search of materialistic pleasure, we are missing our mental peace and happiness. All researches reveal that the most important aim of education is to develop happy responsible citizen who bring harmony and happiness in society.

So, it is need of hour that we should develop a curriculum which not only improves cognitive skills, languages, literacy and numeracy, the arts but also improve social-emotional skills and happiness of students. Curriculum must have topics which build capacity of students in scholastic area of literacy,

mathematics, science and other subjects as well as co-scholastic skills like mindfulness, self-awareness, critical thinking, reflection and inner stability.

Delhi Government Happiness curriculum is built on philosophies of great thinkers and educationists such as Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore and Jiddu Krishnamurthy. Philosopher Agraahar Nagraj's concept of "Happiness Triad" form the basis of Happiness Curriculum. Happiness Triad advocates that we have three components of happiness- momentary happiness, long term happiness and sustainable happiness. Momentary Happiness is through our senses, longer happiness is through feelings in relationships and sustainable happiness is through learning and awareness. Real happiness is internal which is realized when we do some creative work like solve a problem, learn something new, understand a concept or some meaning. Sustainable happiness is that which involves clarity of thoughts, self-awareness, focused mind, mindful and have a purpose in life.

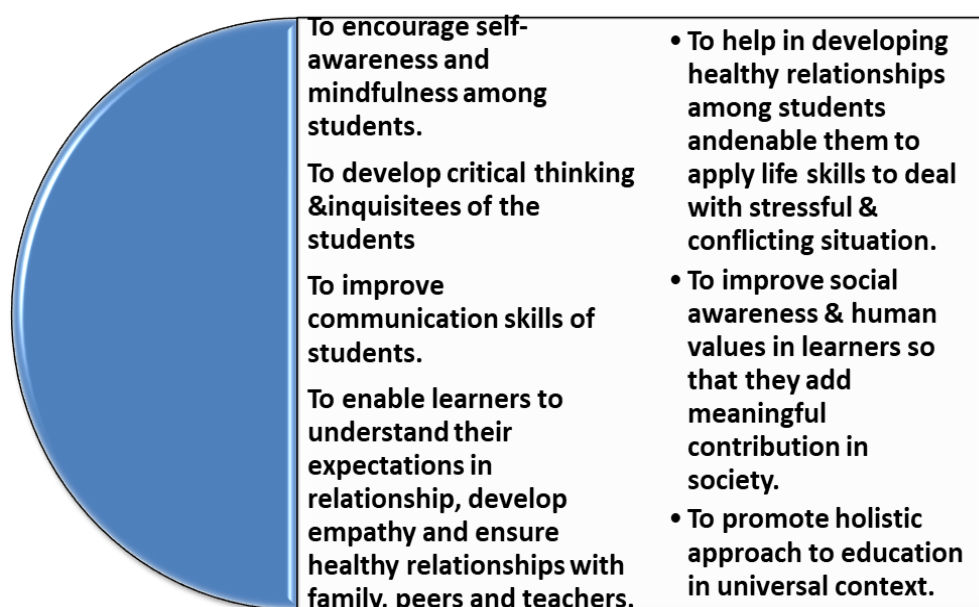


Fig. 4 Objectives of Happiness Curriculum of Delhi Government

It is obvious from the objectives of Happiness program for school education that this course is for Social-Emotional learning of students. Following mindfulness and other activities suggested in curriculum, students will be self-aware, able to handle their emotions, having good relationships and good decision making, ultimately, they will be happy and successful individuals.

School Health Program Under Ayushman Bharat

As given in the Preface of the operational guidelines of School Health Program under Ayushman Bharat, Nation health depends upon health of its citizens. A healthy child become healthy and responsible citizen. All over the world, leaders advocate that schools are the most important place where children develop

behavior and skills for physical, emotional and social well-being. Schools are the useful platform to address large population. Government has launched “School Health Program” under Ayushman Bharat in 2018. The focus of this program is to improve health and prevention intervention. Ministry of Health & Welfare and Department of School Education under Ministry of Education (MoE) collaboratively working on this program.

Focus of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) is on health and education throughout the world. In India there are 47.3 crore children (0-18 years) which is 39% of the total country population (census 2011). To aware children about their health and the right behaviors is very important, so that they can lead a happy, healthy life and can add to the growth of the country. Well-aware, educated, healthy and productive adults will form the base of strong, flourishing and sustainable community.

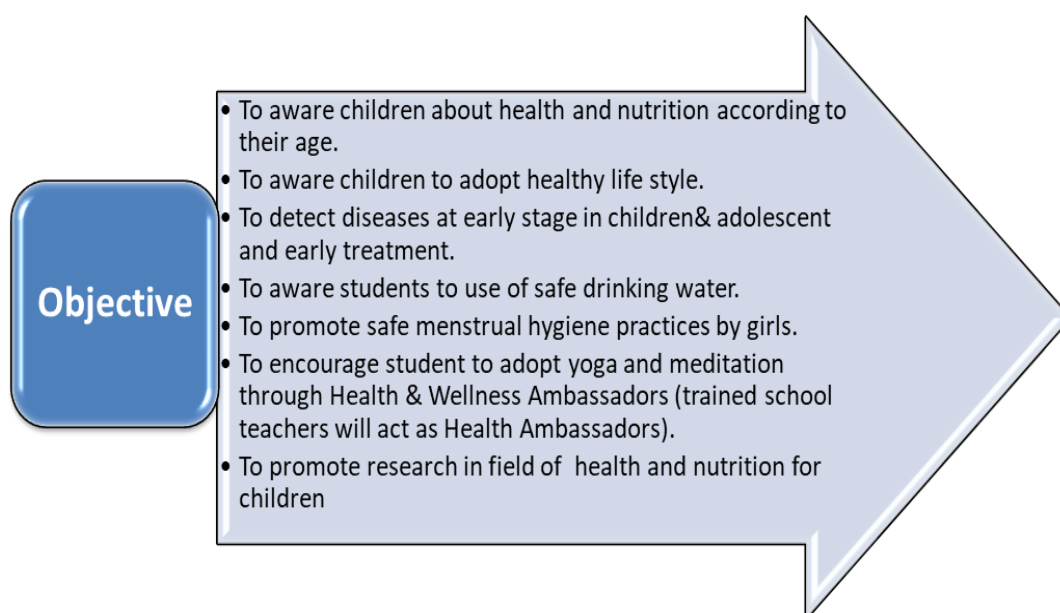


Fig. 5 Objectives of School Health Program Under Ayushman Bharat

School health program emphasizes on healthy behavior along with nutrition, menstrual hygiene, yoga & meditation, early detection of diseases etc. Healthy behavior is other name to social-emotional skills, as a child with strong SEL has self-awareness, self-management, Social-awareness, good relationship building and responsible decision making, which help the child to have healthy behavior.

Recommendations

The systemic study of various policies and programs launched by Ministry of Education or Health department in field of school education indicates that Government policies and programs have been increasingly giving importance to social-emotional learning. However, authors have the view that a lot of work has to be done for implementation and to achieve results of programs related to SEL.

On the basis of above discussions, it can be stated that key focus should be on capacity building of teachers. Teachers' orientations and workshops may be organized for their awareness on SEL and its use in day-to-day life. Once teachers realize the need of SEL for success in life, know the implementation strategies, much can be achieved. A self-motivated teacher, who knows the importance of SEL for success in academics and life, will be able to inculcate these skills among students. It is encouraging to find NEP 2020 reiterating the role of SEL in development of citizens of tomorrow. NISHTHA setting the road map through capacity building of teachers. Happiness curriculum living to the vision. But for the policy vision to be translated into classroom practices it is imperative that curriculum, teachers, parents and school leadership unanimously acknowledges and appreciates the role of SEL. Promoting community connect, volunteering for a social cause, mindfulness, practices to promote responsible decision making are implemented; we will truly be heading for a nation which socially and emotionally intelligent. Authors are hopeful that vision projected through of government policies and for SEL of students will be visible in coming years, which will lead to a happy, calm and progressive society.

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