

Happiness Curriculum: Perceptions and Experiences of Students and Teachers in Delhi

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Abstract

The Happiness Curriculum was launched in 2018 for children studying in schools run by the Delhi government. This study was conducted to understand the perceptions and experiences of the students and teachers of class 8th about the Happiness Curriculum in Delhi. The study was conducted to determine how teachers were prepared to transact the Happiness Curriculum and identify the benefits gained and challenges faced while implementing it. An exploratory research design was used for this study. The study sample consisted of 100 of class VIII and 10 teachers of a government school in South-West Delhi. A questionnaire and a semi-structured interview schedule were developed for data collection. The data obtained was both quantitative and qualitative.

The majority of the students and teachers liked the Happiness Curriculum and its activities. The students enjoyed story-telling sessions, mindfulness activities, fun games, and activities the most. The majority of teachers and students reported that the time spent in the Happiness classes was adequate for interacting and doing all the activities. Students and teachers found that the time given to Happiness Classes had no adverse effect on the time available for teaching other subjects in school. Students felt refreshed after attending the Happiness Classes. They enjoyed the class and felt that their day in school was happier due to these classes, and they could focus better on their studies. More students had started coming forward to share and discuss their problems with the teachers. This is attributed to enhancing the student-teacher relationship and the class environment. Teachers regularly gave feedback about the happiness classes to the students. Meetings were held in the schools with other teachers to discuss Happiness Classes. This helped in regular monitoring and implementation of the Happiness Classes. All the teachers received training to conduct happiness classes. Lack of adequate time for implementing the Happiness Curriculum and the need for further training were reported as the main challenges experienced by the teachers. All the students enjoyed the Happiness classes. Teachers recommended that the Happiness Classes should also be conducted for classes IX to XII as the students in these senior classes faced more stress and anxiety due to the pressure of their studies and career goals. Teachers reported that the Happiness Classes had improved the health and emotional well-being of the students and enhanced their life skills, irrespective of their academic level. The study recommends that the Happiness Classes should be implemented regularly as they improve the student-teacher relationship and create a stress-free environment in school. The relevance of the Happiness Curriculum should be reinforced to the students and teachers to sustain interest and draw desirable outcomes. Follow-up training should be conducted for all the teachers to ensure proper delivery of the Happiness Curriculum.

Keywords: *Happiness Curriculum, Happiness Classes, Life Skills, Children, Delhi Government Schools*

Introduction

The Happiness Curriculum is an initiative of the

Government of Delhi, launched in July 2018. At the time of its launch, it was estimated that more than 10 lakh students of Delhi government schools would be taught in these classes. According to the Dalai Lama, India can lead the world by uniting modern and ancient knowledge and helping humanity overcome its "negative emotions" (Times of India, 2018).

Happiness

Happiness is a feeling that comes over a person when they think life is good and positive. It gives a sense of well-being, joy, or contentment. Happiness is a feeling used in the context of mental and emotional states. According to Webster's dictionary, Happiness is defined as enjoying, marked by pleasure, joy, or satisfaction. The satisfaction people get after achieving a goal or aim gives them a feeling of happiness (Alipour, 2012). According to Seligman's Well-being model, the construct of happiness includes five major elements- Positive emotions, Engagement, Meaning, Positive relationships, and Accomplishment (Pascha M, 2019).

Happiness is a multifaceted construct and a strong indicator of the "quality of life" and well-being of a person. Well-being refers to the state of overall satisfaction with one's life and is composed of both cognitive and affective aspects of happiness.

Importance of Happiness

In today's life, people neglect to cultivate their happiness. Feeling happy is very important as it results in feeling healthier both mentally and physically. It makes people more energetic, creative, and fun to be around; it may also lead to becoming more financially successful. Interaction with loved ones is also important for living a happy life; people have partners, families, and friends with whom they can interact. People who live in complete isolation are less happy and often not satisfied with their life. At the global level, if there is unhappiness around the world, it may have a massive impact. Unhappy souls are the core reasons for the grounds of terrorism and war. A happy soul has the potential to change the lives of others by

being around and spreading positivity. People sometimes relate happiness with materialistic things such as new cars, houses, jobs, etc., but this happiness is temporary and does not last forever (Durham, 2019).

Happiness plays a prominent role in helping children understand their emotions, identify their emotions, express their feelings, and develop friendship skills from an early age.

Ways to Attain Happiness

Getting rid of negative energies that occur in people's lives helps them attain happiness. Getting rid of negative thoughts and rationalising problems and self-doubts helps in excluding feelings such as depression, fear, boredom, worry, dissatisfaction, and grief. Attaining happiness is very important for contentment and peace of mind. We have all heard that Happiness Comes from within. It is said, "You will find true happiness in life when you realise it only takes "you" to be happy. True happiness lies within yourself; it doesn't come from others". However, most people dismiss this as irrelevant. It needs to be understood that happiness is a state of mind. It cannot be achieved from things we see outside. We have the power to create happiness with the help of positive emotions, which can be achieved with good thoughts. It is our thoughts that create our emotions. So, we need to work on building positive thoughts and a positive outlook towards life. This would ultimately result in true happiness. (Belmer 2018).

Importance of Education

Education is one of the foundation rocks of a person's growth. It helps in the evolution of culture and tradition in society. It has been an integral part of our society since ancient times. There are always many parts of education in every country, and most of the parts of education have been influenced by the rules and regulations of the institutions that have been part of the society. The main purpose of education is to create a person who is happy, confident, and well-informed to play the role of a meaningful citizen in society.

Happiness and Education

Happiness is the greatest expression of human beings. Over the past few years, educational administrators worldwide have realised the need for a Happiness Curriculum for the well-being of students at an early age. Such a curriculum helps engage students in good relationships with family and friends and makes them more sensitive to society, more self-aware, and emotionally mature.

According to experts, the quality of students' education is related to the environment of their school, which in turn depends on the attitude, positive vibes, and mood of the teaching and non-teaching staff.

Life Skills

Life Skills education refers to a behaviour change or behaviour development approach designed to address the balance of three areas: knowledge, attitude, and skills". The World Health Organisation has defined Life Skills as "the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life" (WHO, 2021). The Mental Health Promotion and Policy (MHP) team in the World Health Organisation's Department of Mental Health states that Life Skills education facilitates the practice and reinforcement of psychosocial skills in a culturally and developmentally appropriate way; it contributes to the promotion of personal and social development, the prevention of health and social problems and the protection of Human rights" (SCERT, 2024).

Need for Life Skills

Life Skills help individuals and communities to solve problems, make informed decisions, think critically and creatively, empathise with others, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, and cope with and productively manage life. Realising the importance of Life Skills education, it has been introduced in the Indian school educational system in the syllabus of the Central Board of Secondary Education India (CBSE) at various levels and in some other state boards. In today's modern society, these skills are more relevant and necessary to prepare

students for facing the present-day challenges of life.

Life skills education helps guide children and create general awareness about their surroundings. It also improves their decision-making skills and mental and physical well-being. In developing life skills, there is personal fulfilment, the realisation of social responsibility, a sense of empowerment, and the capacity to be a part of a heterogeneous group and strive for common goals. This can also lead to success in personal and professional life. The idea of success is not only the accomplishment of a happy working life but also the creation of a self-fulfilling life outside the world of work and wealth creation. With the help of Life skills training, youth can be educated about effective communication, decision-making, teamwork, and maintaining relationships (Egyankosh, 2020).

There is growing awareness of the need for Life skills training to help youth manage the transition from school to work and become active, healthy citizens. Schools and universities are increasingly adding Life Skills as part of the formal curriculum, as an afterschool activity, or as part of career guidance services—often with the support of youth organisations that oversee or directly implement these training programs.

The Happiness Curriculum

The Government of Delhi, to train young minds to be happy, confident, and content human beings and to develop their personality, launched the 'Happiness Curriculum' in schools to focus on students' emotional well-being. Happiness classes have been introduced in Schools for students of Nursery to class 8th (Doshi V, 2018). The curriculum focused on the holistic development of students by providing them with an education that included meditation, mental exercise, and value education. This can help in their personality development. The Happiness Curriculum focuses on the happiness level of the students by making them focused and feel positive about their lives. The Happiness Curriculum aims to impart emotional intelligence through meditation, storytelling, and activities that focus on students' emotional and

mental needs. These skills are intended to reduce stress and anxiety (Kundu P, 2018).

The primary purpose of education is to create happy, confident, and fulfilled human beings who will play meaningful roles in society. Happiness is the greatest human expression. Across the world, education administrators are realising the need for happiness or well-being lessons for children. Self-aware, sensitive, and emotionally mature children are far more successful owing to their advanced ability to engage in meaningful relationships with their family, friends, and society. The solutions to modern-day problems like the increase in suicide rates of school-going adolescents, terrorism, corruption, and pollution could come from these classrooms (Rai S, 2018).

Every school under the Government of Delhi has been mandated to provide 45 minutes for Happiness Classes in their daily timetable. The Happiness Curriculum has been prepared for children studying nursery-VIII in class. These 45 minutes comprise sections which are divided according to the needs of the students attending the Happiness Class. This includes sections for mindfulness activities, storytelling, meditation, and self-expression activities. Each class helps engage students in good relationships with family and friends, makes them more sensitive towards society, more self-aware, and emotionally mature (TOI, 2018). All the exercises train the children to think logically and creatively, understand how to be positive, and know their role in the social system and nature (Kundu 2018). A periodic assessment is done to assess the progress of the children. Feedback is regularly taken from the students by their teachers to determine if they have any issues or doubts regarding the Happiness Class, other subjects, or any personal matters.

Objectives

- To find out the perceptions of students and teachers regarding the utility of the Happiness Curriculum
- To study the perceptions of students and teachers regarding the methods and materials

used for transacting various activities of the Happiness Curriculum

- To find out the process the teachers follow to prepare to conduct the Happiness Curriculum
- To find out the challenges faced by the teachers in implementing the Happiness Curriculum

Methodology

Type of Research

The study had an exploratory research design, and a mixed-method approach was used to collect quantitative and qualitative data. The study was conducted in a Government boys' school in Dwarka, in the southwest district of Delhi. The sample comprised 100 students and 10 teachers of class VIII who conducted the Happiness classes. A purposive sampling technique was used to select the school, class, and sample of 100 students (12-14-year-old boys) from all 5 sections of class VIII. Further, 2 students from each of the 5 sections were selected for interviewing to gain in-depth information on the study objectives. The study tools comprised a questionnaire and semi-structured interview schedule for the students and a semi-structured interview schedule for the teachers. The data was collected from December 2018 to January 2019.

Salient Findings

The salient findings from the study were:

Profile of Students

All respondents were boys in Class VIII, with most being 13 years old.

Profile of Teachers

The teachers were aged 31 to 40. Four were male, and six were female. They had been conducting Happiness Classes for 2 to 5 months and teaching subjects such as Math, Science, Hindi, and English.

Activities Conducted in Happiness Classes

The four main activities reported to be conducted under the Happiness Curriculum were Mindfulness, Storytelling, Activities, and Self-expression. Storybooks were the primary reading

material, with the curriculum comprising 20 stories for students of classes VI to VIII. These activities aimed to foster logical and creative thinking and enhance students' understanding of their roles in society and nature through self-expression.

Engagement of Students during Happiness Curriculum

Most students reported being actively engaged with teachers during Happiness Classes, and all enjoyed them. Teachers recommended expanding Happiness Classes beyond nursery to VIII to include senior classes (IX to XII), as the older students faced increased stress and anxiety due to academics and several other factors.

Adequacy of Duration for Happiness Classes

The majority of students and teachers found the allocated time for Happiness Classes adequate for interaction and activities. However, a few students stated that more time should be assigned to them.

Effect of Happiness Classes on Other Subjects

Most students believed that the time allocated for other subjects remained sufficient despite the Happiness Classes. Some students preferred that core subjects like Math and Science be scheduled immediately after the Happiness Classes.

Opinions of Students After Happiness Classes

A majority of the students reported that they felt refreshed after attending Happiness Classes, enjoying a happier day and improving their concentration on studies. Less than 10% of the students found the Happiness classes boring. However, self-expression activities received less favourable reviews due to students' lack of understanding of their relevance. The teachers reported positive behavioural changes not only in their students but also in themselves. It was stated that the Happiness Curriculum helped to reduce the student's anxiety and stress and promoted their overall mental and physical well-being. Happiness classes were reported to enhance the motivation, creativity, and social skills of the students.

Feedback Sessions

It was reported that most teachers conducted Feedback sessions on Happiness classes regularly, either daily or weekly, to support students, especially those who were hesitant to speak in class. However, two teachers reported that the frequency of the Feedback sessions should be higher.

Training of Teachers for Happiness Classes

Seven teachers who taught the Happiness classes shared that they had received two days of professional training. The remaining three teachers were trained by school staff and coordinators—the training aimed to equip teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary for effectively delivering the Happiness Curriculum.

Challenges Faced by Teachers in Implementing Happiness Curriculum

The teachers reported no challenges in implementing the Happiness Curriculum and found conducting the classes very relaxing and enjoyable.

Conclusion

The study concluded that the Happiness Curriculum received positive feedback from students and teachers. They expressed a strong liking for it, particularly the story-telling sessions, mindfulness activities, and various fun games and activities. Students were most engaged during story-telling and mindfulness activities. The allocated time for Happiness Classes was considered adequate by the majority of teachers and students, allowing sufficient interaction and participation in all activities without negatively affecting the study of other subjects.

Students found Happiness Classes interesting and engaging, leading to improved student-teacher relationships and a positive class environment. They preferred core subjects like Maths and Science to follow immediately after these classes, feeling refreshed and happier throughout the school day, which enhanced their focus on studies. The teachers actively sought feedback from students and held meetings to discuss Happiness Classes, ensuring regular monitoring and effective implementation.

All teachers received training to conduct these classes effectively, emphasising the importance of teacher skills in engaging students in various activities for the program's success. Teachers reported no major challenges in conducting Happiness Classes. Teachers recommended the introduction of happiness classes for students in classes IX to XII. They observed that Happiness Classes positively impacted students' health and emotional well-being amongst students of all classes, suggesting their regular implementation to maintain the benefits accrued.

To sustain teachers' interest and motivation, it is recommended that the relevance of the Happiness Curriculum be reinforced among students and teachers, advocating for follow-up training to ensure effective delivery. The Happiness Curriculum and its activities received widespread approval from students and teachers,

as they played a vital role in creating a stress-free and positive learning environment in the school.

Recommendations

- Happiness Classes should be conducted regularly as they contribute to making students happy in school, increasing interest in studies, and improving the student-teacher relationship. This is likely to ensure enhanced student attendance and participation in school.
- Students and teachers should be reinforced on the importance of mindfulness activities, story-telling, and games, as well as on the relevance of the Happiness Curriculum.
- Follow-up training should be conducted for all the teachers to ensure proper delivery of the Happiness Curriculum.

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