# Happiness Curriculum
Theory, Practice and Way Forward

**In Collaboration with Cell for Human Values and Transformative Learning, SCERT, Delhi**

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

# MESSAGE FROM DIRECTOR, EDUCATION & SPORTS – DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION, GOVT. OF NCT OF DELHI

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## MESSAGE

Launched in 2018, the Happiness Curriculum has been hailed as a landmark educational initiative which aims at promoting happiness and wellbeing of children. This curriculum is implemented through regular 'happiness periods' which consist of mindfulness, story-telling sessions and reflective discussions.

During the past three years, happiness classes have brought about a significant change in the lives of students, teachers and parents. It has increased focus and mindfulness among students, improved the relationship between teachers and students and increased participation inside the classroom. The Happiness Curriculum has led to enormous curiosity and interest among educators across the globe. Several states in India and Nepal, UAE, Afghanistan have expressed their interest in introducing similar programs. People are curious to know what the curriculum entails, how it is implemented in classrooms and its impact on students. This report attempts to shed light on some of these questions.

The report, titled 'Happiness Curriculum: Theory, Practice and Way Forward' – is a timely publication which provides an overview of the Happiness Curriculum and its elements. This report explores the theoretical underpinnings of the Happiness Curriculum by conceptualizing happiness education through scientific and philosophical approaches. It provides a snapshot of similar initiatives in Australia, UK, Japan, Bhutan which have introduced programs and policies on holistic development of students.

This report establishes linkages between the Happiness Curriculum and the UNESCO Happy Schools Framework (2016). It also presents a framework for curriculum analysis and measurement tools and some testimonials from students, teachers and parents. There are useful recommendations on implementation and disseminations strategies of the Happiness Curriculum.

I am confident that this report will serve as a useful guide for a range of stakeholders from policymakers, researchers, teachers, students and parents to understand more about the Happiness Curriculum.
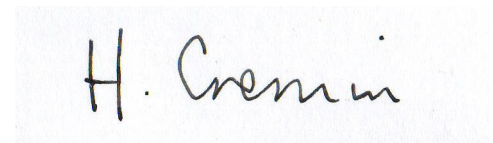
(HIMANSHU GUPTA)

# FOREWORD

There can be few things more important than happiness in the lives of young people and their families and teachers. It remains inexplicable that, until recently, we have neglected this important truism. In fact, education systems throughout the world have continued to operate as if the opposite were the case – with strict discipline, rote learning, and high stakes-testing blighting the lives of many. Students have traditionally been selected for higher-level education or meaningful employment based on their ability to endure boring, content-driven and irrelevant curricula, and, of course, on whether or not they can remain passive or non-economic for sustained periods of time. No wonder education continues to act as a source of inequality!

We know, of course, that, quite to the contrary, young people learn best when they feel happy, safe, and valued, and when they are challenged and supported by teachers whose own needs and happiness have been considered. They also learn best when the curriculum is relevant to their lives, and when they can practise and develop the skills and knowledge that they learn. Young people who know how to be mindful, who reflect on their lives and aspirations, and who engage with conflict and real-life moral dilemmas are already flourishing. They take their maturity, engagement and happiness with them into their adult lives easily and naturally.

This report provides an overview of the excellent Happiness Curriculum that has been developed in New Delhi. It provides a context for this work from both international and Indian philosophers and educationalists, and it usefully analyses the Happiness Curriculum in the light of some important indicators. The report will enable reflection and development at this significant time in the life of the project. I, for one, am very much looking forward to seeing what this fascinating initiative from India will teach the rest of the world about the links between education and happiness.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

# INTRODUCTION

Even though we are in an educational era of measuring learning and achievement outcomes (Biesta, 2010), there is also growing emphasis on teaching non-cognitive skills and promoting social emotional competencies such as: perseverance, resilience, empathy, creativity and happiness in schools (Schuelka et al., 2019). In 2018, the Delhi government launched the "Happiness Curriculum" - an initiative which focuses on the happiness of children in 1,030 government schools in New Delhi, India. It was a remarkable shift from the traditional notions of teaching and learning in schools in India. The impetus to shift focus from academic performance of students to their well-being has recently gained momentum in the West through emergence of concepts like the social and emotional learning (SEL). In the Indian context, this discussion has finally taken off with the happiness curriculum which draws on ancient traditions and the field of positive psychology and social-emotional learning to reimagine the purpose of education. In a world characterized by inter-connectedness of ideas, values and actions, this blend of the Eastern and Western understanding of happiness and wellbeing in the context of education is a promising endeavour and needs to be explored.

While there has been widespread media coverage on the rollout of the happiness curriculum in New Delhi, research and documentation is still scarce on it. In the past two years, the happiness curriculum has led to enormous curiosity and interest among policymakers, researchers, teachers, and parents in India. This curriculum paved the way for adoption of Anandam Pathyacharya in Uttarakhand and several other states in India have expressed their interest in replicating the curriculum (Hindustan Times, 2019). Indian public schools have taught value education and moral science lessons since decades and environmental studies in recent years has been an addition. However, the launch of the happiness curriculum is one of its kind owing to the scale and the attention given to its effective implementation by the Directorate of Education Govt. of NCT of Delhi. It is being viewed as a pleasant change in an eco-system which is often criticised for its emphasis on assessments and learning outcomes.

Against this backdrop, we at Dream a Dream felt the need to produce a report which explores the theoretical underpinnings of the happiness curriculum and reflects on the journey of its implementation in Delhi schools.

In this report, we provide an overview of the Happiness Curriculum and discuss the conceptual approaches to happiness and education - scientific approaches (positive education, social and emotional learning) and philosophical approaches (Indian and Western). A snapshot of four similar initiatives across the world is then provided to emphasise on practices that have moved beyond academic achievements and established new ways of learning and thinking focused on holistic development of students. Next, we discuss how the elements of Happiness Curriculum are reflected in the UNESCO Happy Schools Framework (2016). The Happiness Curriculum framework with a focus on the intended learning outcomes, findings from the curriculum analysis and the different methods to measure its effectiveness derived up until now is explained in detail. Testimonials are presented to capture the voices of students, teachers, and parents in Delhi government schools. Finally, we discuss the way forward and offer recommendations and conclusion.

# I. OVERVIEW OF THE HAPPINESS CURRICULUM

Manish Sisodia (2019) states in "Shiksha: My Experiments as an Education Minister" that education can help raise the consciousness of the country and society. The desire to make children better human beings is central to the conceptualisation of the happiness curriculum. The curriculum was developed by the Delhi government in partnership with 40 teachers and five NGOs - Dream a Dream, Labhya Foundation, Blue Orb, Abhivavak Vidhyalay and Circle of Life with expertise on life skills, human values, child psychology, mindfulness and socio-emotional learning (SCERT-Delhi & DoE, 2019). The selected teachers also referred to as 'mentor teachers' were trained in "Madhyasth Darshan" or "co-existential philosophy", propounded by Indian philosopher Agrahar Nagraj Sarman (1999/2015). Later, Dream a Dream trained these mentor teachers in schools using life skills approaches for children and empathy-based pedagogies (Kim et al., 2019).

**The Happiness Triad**

A Nagraj defined happiness as 'a state of no-conflict, synergy, or a state of being in acceptance' (SCERT-Delhi & DoE, 2019, p. 12). According to him, human living comprises of four dimensions - an integrated form of material, behavioural, intellectual, and experiential aspects. These constituents resemble senses, feelings, learning (understanding) and awareness. Together, this forms the "happiness triad" (see Figure 1) composed of physical senses (labelled as Momentary Happiness), feelings within relationships (labelled as Deeper Happiness), and learning and awareness (labelled as Sustainable Happiness).
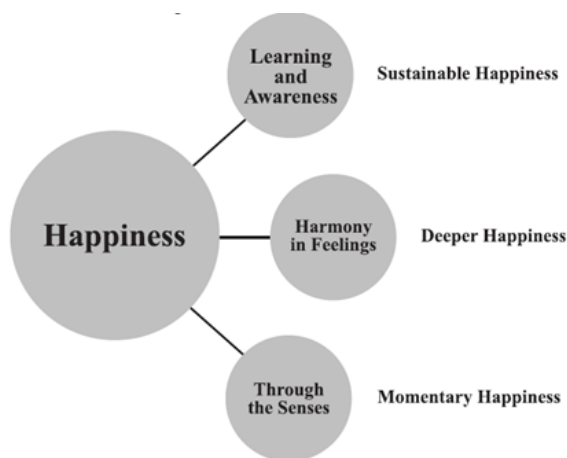


Figure 1: Happiness Triad (SCERT-Delhi & DoE, 2019)

Momentary happiness is experienced through the five senses of sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste. Activities such as watching films, listening to music, hugging a friend, eating good food make us happy momentarily and lasts from a few seconds to a couple of hours(SCERT-Delhi & DoE, 2019). Deeper happiness is experienced through feelings in relationships when our desires such as gratitude, respect, love, care are fulfilled. Feelings in a relationship also establish value and this lasts for a longer time than the happiness felt by our senses (SCERT-Delhi & DoE, 2019). Finally, sustainable happiness involves

being aware of our own thoughts, learning to be mindful of our actions and being free from internal conflict. It is characterized by deeper understanding of self, clarity of thought, being able to concentrate, find meaning, purpose and inter-connectedness in life (SCERT-Delhi & DoE, 2019). The happiness curriculum adopts this triad as the philosophical basis and aims at developing capacities of students to move beyond momentary and deeper happiness and achieve sustainable happiness.

'Happiness triad' is relatable to learners as individuals with excellent academic qualification and skills could still be unhappy if they lack clarity of purpose and have conflicting emotions (SCERT-Delhi & DoE, 2019).

## Objectives of the Happiness Curriculum

The objectives of the happiness curriculum are to (SCERT-Delhi & DoE, 2018, p. 14):
- Develop self-awareness and mindfulness amongst learners
- Inculcate skill of critical thinking & inquiry in the learners
- Enable learners to communicate effectively and express themselves freely and creatively
- Enable learners to understand their expectations in relationships, develop empathy, and ensure healthy relationships with family, peers & teachers
- Enable learners to apply life skills to deal with stressful and conflicting situations around them
- Develop social awareness & human values in learners to engage in meaningful contribution in society
- Develop holistic approach to education in a universal context

Guiding these objectives are the principles of the National Curriculum Framework (NCERT, 2005), which are as follows:

- Connecting knowledge to life outside of school
- Ensuring that learning is shifted away from rote methods
- Enriching the curriculum to provide for the overall development of children rather than maintain a textbook-centric approach
- Making examinations more flexible and integrated into classroom life
- Nurturing an overriding identity informed by caring concerns within the democratic principles of the country.

There are two important points to note: first, the happiness curriculum focuses on development of social and emotional learning skills among learners which helps them to become mindful, self-aware, think critically and build positive relationships. Second, it aims to enable learners to become socially aware and inculcate values to make significant contributions to the society. The curriculum is not limited to developing social and emotional skills in learners, it has a broader perspective which concerns the role of happiness in educational pursuits and its impact on the society at large. Hence, the discussion on happiness education in India needs to necessarily include philosophical approaches, in addition to the measurable social and emotional learning skills.

Osher et al. (2016) have argued that it is important to contemplate about the cultural relevance of values, attitudes, behaviour, and meanings of concepts related to social and emotional learning. For

instance, people's ability to interpret and express their emotions vary differently based on linguistic, cultural and religious factors in diverse societies (Hoffman, 2009). Scholars have raised concerns that SEL practices have been majorly developed in the West and might not adequately address the needs of culturally different societies (CASEL, 2013). The happiness curriculum in India adopts an approach which is an amalgamation of SEL approaches in the West and the localized and contextualized understanding of happiness and its significance in the Indian context. To explore the relevance of happiness in education systems across the world, we review positive psychology and SEL related literature to reflect on the diverse ways in which the Indian and Western philosophers have defined happiness.

# II. CONCEPTUAL APPROACHES TO HAPPINESS AND EDUCATION

**Scientific approaches to happiness and education**

*Positive education*

American Psychologist and educator Martin Seligman was influential in developing positive psychology, which later came to be known as the 'science of happiness' in the 1990s. The tendency of human beings and the field of psychology is to focus on negative experiences in life which impedes our ability to learn and our happiness is compromised (Seligman, 2002). Positive psychologists believe that this negativity can be balanced by focusing on the positive. Seligman (2002) argues that positive emotions (feelings), positive traits (skills and competencies) and positive institutions (schools) can enable children to thrive and flourish in a positive environment. Therefore, in addition to traditional subjects, well-being should be taught in schools (Seligman et al., 2009). According to them, well-being programmes can: "promote skills and strengths that are valued by most, and perhaps all, parents; produce measurable improvements in students' well-being and behaviour; and facilitate students' engagement in learning and achievement" (Seligman et al., 2009, p. 295). They referred to the process of teaching both the skills of well-being and the skills of achievement in schools without comprising on either of the two as 'positive education'. The International Positive Education Network (IPEN) defines Positive Education as a 'double helix' of academics coupled with character and well-being (IPEN, 2016). Over the past few years, western schools have been engaged in creating a whole-school culture which focuses on well-being of students as well as staff (Fox Eades et al., 2013).

Seligman (2002) emphasizes three kinds of happiness in his book "Authentic happiness": pleasant life (pleasure), engaged life (engagement/good) and the meaningful life. Fox Eades et al. (2013) discuss this in the context of educational settings such as happiness in classrooms:

*Pleasant life:* In this kind of happiness, human beings seek to maximise pleasure and minimize pain. Creating a positive mood at the start of the school day through "play, laughter, recollecting a happy memory or food" is beneficial for students. Other examples include elements like writing happy memories or thank you letters as part of the school curricula. These positive emotions can help students learn better and create a space in the school for students to feel happy.

*Engaged life:* This state of being involves students being in control and active which in turn leads them to feel motivated, engaged and joyful (Shernoff & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009). Mindfulness and storytelling can improve attention, concentration, awareness, and engagement of students.

*Meaningful life:* This state of being is closely aligned to the Buddhist conception of happiness which focuses on lasting well-being and selflessness as an integral part of life. In classrooms, activities that engage students in searching for meaning can contribute to a lasting form of happiness.

Positive education programs have focused on variables such as resilience, grit, flow and strengths-based elements as well. Multiple research studies have shown that when students can identify their own strengths and recognize and appreciate strengths in others, it leads to fewer behavioural problems, improves academic performance and leads to higher well-being (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Shoshani & Slone, 2013; Toner et al., 2012).

*Social and Emotional Learning*

The advent of social and emotional learning programs broadened the conversation around well-being in schools by focusing on emotional regulation i.e., the ability to recognize and appropriately regulate and express emotions. Since its introduction, first in the book Promoting Social and Emotional Learning: Guidelines for Educators (Elias et al., 1997), SEL approaches have focused on teaching both students and adults' methods for understanding and managing emotions and social interactions. The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defines SEL as the "process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions" (CASEL, 2020). The CASEL approach focuses on five interrelated sets of cognitive, affective, and behavioural competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Weissberg et al., 2015; Osher et al., 2016). The word 'learning' was added by CASEL to the term 'social and emotional' to emphasize that the five core competencies can be acquired and practiced in schools which is a hub of learning.

The effectiveness of SEL programs as a school-based intervention has been demonstrated in several research studies: improvement in students' academic performance (Zins et al., 2004), improvement in prosocial behaviours and attitudes such as self-esteem and bonding to school and reduction in emotional distress such as issues related to anxiety and depression (Durlak et al., 2011). Sklad et al. (2012) discovered that SEL programs had significant positive effect as the average SEL programmes student had better social and emotional skills than 76% of non-SEL students. Another recent study by Mahoney et al. (2018) offers insights into the effectiveness of SEL programmes in fostering students' SEL skills, attitudes and behaviours while also rejecting the claim that the time invested in SEL programmes can negatively impact students' academic achievement. Terming SEL as the "missing piece" Schonert-Reichl (2020) argues that despite its intricate linkages with school success, it has not been given the required attention until recently.

It is apparent from the literature reviewed in this section that the positive education and social and emotional learning movements have played a significant role in highlighting the importance of teaching happiness and well-being in schools.

**Philosophical approaches to happiness and education**

*Western Traditions of Happiness*

Hedonism and Eudaimonia have dominated the discourse of Western philosophical traditions of happiness. In ancient times, Epicurus (1987) was a proponent of hedonism and considered pleasure and

pain to be indicators for good and bad in life. Later, Bentham (1748-1832) and Mill (1806-1873) were well-known hedonists who believed happiness concerns maximization of pleasure and minimization of pain (McMohan, 2013). Aristotle, on the other hand, advocated for eudaimonia in which human beings strive to realize one's full potential and live a worthwhile life by giving meaning and direction to it (Kashdan et al., 2008). He believed 'happiness is virtue' and when 'activity' is in accordance with 'virtue', human beings can 'act rightly and attain what is noble and good' (Crisp, 2000, p. 14). The Aristotelian view refutes hedonic conception of happiness by shifting the focus to efforts and virtue. Aristotle stated that human beings should strive towards include virtues such as courage, temperance, proper ambition, patience, truthfulness, wittiness, friendliness, modesty, and righteous indignation (Kashdan et al., 2008, p. 222).

*Indian traditions of happiness*

In India, happiness has been explored in ancient texts and scriptures like Vedas, Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita. In recent times, Salagame (2013) has explored the meaning of happiness and well-being from the Hindu perspective which states that life concerns "nature of reality, the universe and the beings in it" (p. 372). According to Salagame (2017), "The debate in Indian psychology and culture about the nature of happiness has centred on the sources of happiness as either extrinsic (related to fulfilling desires and avoiding suffering) or intrinsic (focused on the cultivation of an intrinsic spiritual state of consciousness)" (p.67). He argues that 'sukha' (happiness) is achieved through extrinsic pursuits in life and 'ananda' (bliss) is achieved through intrinsic pursuits which leads human beings to search for higher meaning in life.

Buddhist conception of an ideal way of living is to develop a state of mind which embraces all joys and sorrows that comes in one's way (Lama & Cutler, 1998; Ricard, 2007). Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha attained enlightenment in his quest for meaning while undergoing trials and suffering in life. Buddhist view of life concerns both self and others and is enriched by the desire for everyone to find meaning in their lives (Ricard, 2007). According to the Buddha, the power of mind enables individuals to overcome needs and wants, attain peace of mind, and think positively (Fronsdal, 2005). By attaining such a state of life, individuals can demonstrate kindness and compassion towards others and build positive relationships. Parallels can be drawn between these ancient philosophical traditions and A. Nagraj's 'happiness triad' which distinguishes between the momentary, deeper and sustainable happiness (SCERT-Delhi & DoE, 2019). The happiness curriculum has elements of Indian philosophical traditions and the Aristotelian principles which emphasize on the idea that mere fulfilment of desires cannot give you true sense of happiness and there is no end to this quest. To be happy, human beings need to find satisfaction within oneself and build deep relationships.

*Visions of Education: Philosophies in Practice*

While terms such as 'social and emotional learning', 'life skills', 'positive education' are only three decades old, the interest of educators in holistic development of learners has persisted for over a century. Rabindranath Tagore's conception of educational mission was way ahead of its time. He described the education system as a "factory" which led to "unnatural pressure" among children (Tagore, 1925). Tagore believed that instead of focusing on providing children information, intellectual, physical and spiritual aspects should be merged to enable children live a holistic life (Tagore, 1917/2006). His idea was that

"education should be part of life itself and must not be detached from it and be made into something abstract" (Tagore, 1930/2006, p. 932). Tagore established a school in Shantiniketan, West Bengal in 1901 where children had liberty and freedom to pursue what they wanted to, spend time in nature and surrounding villages and delve into literature and music (Das Gupta, 2006; Nussbaum, 2009).

Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, a Japanese geographer, education theorist and religious reformer stated that the objective of education is lifelong happiness of the learner and value creation (Jaffe, 1993). In his work titled 'The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy' (1930), he critiqued the focus of the Japanese government to build military might and economic development through a centralized school system (Kumagai, 2000). Makiguchi was against complex theoretical interpretations and wished for an experience-oriented education which can enable students to become happy by developing their character and not just by memorizing facts taught in classrooms.

John Dewey (1938), an American educational reformer's theory of experience is grounded in the belief that personal experience and education are fundamentally interconnected. This intrinsic relationship influences the learner's growth and development in educational contexts. Dewey challenged the traditional modes of transmitting knowledge or information to the new generation, advocating for an experiential philosophy which promotes critical thinking and engagement. He stated "education is a development within, by, and for experience" (Dewey, 1938, p. 28).

In recent times, American educator and philosopher Nel Noddings (2003) in "Happiness and Education" has stated that happiness is usually missing as an aim of education. While pointing out that "the best homes and schools are happy places" (p. 261), she argues that adults in these happy places understand the importance of happiness as an aim of education and life itself (Noddings, 2003). She explains that in a happy classroom, teachers seek to establish a balance between expressed and inferred needs. Having fun is generally not associated with learning. She cites an example where teachers were worried when children had too much fun in a science class because science is associated with hard work. According to Noddings, "The atmosphere of classrooms should reflect the universal desire for happiness" (p.246). For this, teachers need to work towards minimising pain and creating opportunities for pleasure, self-understanding, and critical thinking. For those who do not learn, she suggests using intelligent measures such as promoting care and trust, sharing relevant curricula and encouraging parents to facilitate behaviour. Success in securing high standardized test scores cannot and should not be equated with happiness of children (Noddings, 2003).

From the above discussion, we can deduce that both Eastern and Western philosophers have expressed their dissatisfaction with education systems that are oriented towards providing and reproducing information. The assertions of Tagore, Makiguchi, Dewey and Noddings recognize the notion that if happiness is our ultimate pursuit in life, educational experiences must contribute to its enhancement.

# III. SNAPSHOT OF THE GLOBAL BEST PRACTICES ALIGNED TO THE HAPPINESS CURRICULUM

In this section, we provide a brief snapshot of four different programmes or best practices aligned to the objectives of the Happiness Curriculum[1].

**Positive Education Program in Australia**

Geelong Grammar School (GGS) adopted a positive education, strengths-based approach in Australia in 2008 (White, 2013). The school developed an Applied Framework for Positive Education (GGS Model) which concentrates on six domains of wellbeing (similar to Seligman's PERMA model) - positive emotions, positive engagement, positive accomplishment, positive purpose, positive relationships, and positive health (Hoare et al., 2017). It adopted a two-way explicit-implicit approach wherein they taught a set of lessons based on Seligman et al.'s (2009) work to students and integrated these principles into all aspects of school life. The school integrated positive education principles in the pre-existing curriculum by focusing on: strengths, emotion, creativity, self-efficacy, mindfulness, and gratitude (White, 2013).

Seligman et al. (2009) and Norrish et al. (2013) have listed three approaches adopted by GGS in the implementation of the program: teaching positive education, embedding positive education and living positive education. Over the years, this framework has evolved into a cyclical process comprising of four components: Learn it, Live it, Teach it, Embed it (Hoare et al., 2017). Positive education classes for 10th grade students revolved around 'discovering and using signature strengths' through the VIA Character Signature Strengths2[2]test. They also developed a 'family tree' of strengths by interacting with family members to learn how to use their strengths to overcome challenges in life. Other activities included maintaining a record of what went well (WWW) at night in a 'blessings journal', writing gratitude letters to parents, learning how to cherish good memories, overcome negativity bias and the fulfilling characteristics of kindness for a giver (Seligman et al., 2009).

This approach was not limited to standalone courses and positive education was also embedded into academic courses, sports, pastoral counselling and music. For example, teachers used the signature strengths of students to discuss English novels. For instance, "Even though Macbeth is a pretty depressing read, students hypothesise the strengths of the main characters, and how these strengths have both a good and a shadow side" (Seligman et al., 2009, p. 305). Similarly, Geography, religious education and music lessons incorporated characteristics of positive education. Teachers asked students about different methods in which happiness of a country can be measured, prompting them to think about the varying criteria for well-being across countries like Australia, Iran and Indonesia. Elementary school teachers carried out activities

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*1. The information in this section has been sourced from journal articles, guidebooks and education policy documents. The source for each country is listed in Annexure 1.*
*2. The VIA Survey is a scientific survey of character strengths in the world to discover your signature strengths which are likely to be the strengths that matter most to you and are most central to your personal identity. https://www.viacharacter.org/topics/articles/what-are-your-signature-strengths*

such as starting the day with a question "Children, what went well last night?" in a semi-circle. Such questions help students to think, recollect and cherish simple tasks in a day. GGS provided mandatory residential training for new teaching and non-teaching staff and training courses for parents to help them develop an understanding in the six domains of GGS model and enhance their own wellbeing (Hoare et al., 2017).

White (2013) argues that the positive education approach adopted by the Gelong Grammar School is not 'happyology'. The objective was not to just simplify academic content but to "engage students to engage with the full kaleidoscope of positive and negative emotion in their studies, co- curriculum, and pastoral life" (White, 2013, p.659). From this we can deduce that this approach did not look down upon competition, rather it made an attempt to redefine what success truly means in the context of a school. Positive educationists believe that developing an understanding of one's own strengths can lead to an increase in the level of awareness about their own role in the world. It also enables them to manifest greater levels of creativity and meaningful engagement (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

**Japan's Zest for Living – in Akita Prefecture**

In 2008, "Zest for Living" was identified as the fundamental principle of 'The Courses of Study' – national curriculum in Japan. The objective was to "develop well-balanced individuals who are equipped with basic academic skills and knowledge, morale, as well as healthy mind and body" (Yamaguchi et al., 2014, p.1). The focus of Japanese educational policies has been on comprehensive development of students based on "Zest for Living". The UNESCO Happy Schools Framework (2016) selected schools in Akita prefecture as case study because they are renowned for prioritizing school happiness and well-being. The vision of schools in Akita prefecture as listed in the UNESCO report is holistic in its approach and concentrate on happiness and well-being of children. Terms such as 'dreams', 'motivation', 'compassion', 'creativity' and 'happy schools' are present in the vision of these schools. There is no mention of achievements, rather the focus is on fostering children who have dreams and become compassionate human beings.

Recognized for being one of the highest-performing prefectures in Japan's public examinations (National Institute for Educational Policy Research, 2015), schools in Akita focus on moral education and fostering transversal competencies which is reflected in their policies, goals and plans. The Akita Board of Education specifically aims for students: 1) to be aware of their own potentials and cultivate students' motivations to grow themselves; and 2) to build warm and empathetic relationships with others and to seek for the ethical values though the dialogues (Yamaguchi et al., 2014, p.23).

In Higashi Naruse primary school, "involvement" is a key word in their planned activities. For example, teachers use "volleyball type lesson" or "Ping-Pong type lesson" method which refutes the dominant one-way knowledge transfer from teachers to students to an interactive two-way process (Yamaguchi et al., 2014, p.10). These lessons let students develop dialogues to find the way to solve problems. Nearly 45% teachers are involved in formulating these strategies and policies. Schools also actively engages with the local community, which is evident in their high attendance in PTA meetings - 120% with even grandparents and relatives attending. People from the community volunteer to provide sports lessons (Yamaguchi et al., 2014). The school is open for seven days a week for any community member to visit and share their support. Schools also organise open-school events where in anyone in the community is welcome at schools to observe classroom activities. Students participate in activities together with

community members in projects such as 'hometown education' where they engage in planting flowers, joint sports events and games. In this way, students are not limited to just their classrooms and schools but are engaging with members in their own community. Another example is every student in 5th and 6th grade is part of student councils and clubs to plan and implement activities in their schools. This is aimed at students developing inter-personal skills and a sense of global citizenship (Yamaguchi et al., 2014).

In Yuzawa Higashu Primary School, the classrooms are completely open, and doors and some of the interior walls have been removed. This is an extremely unique and innovate strategy as open classrooms were found to "create a sense of transparency, by making the teaching and learning process openly visible to the school community, including other teachers, parents and school staff" (UNESCO, 2016, p.63).

Instead of looking at transversal competencies as an addition to academic credentials, education policies of Akita schools have considered it as 'pre-requisite for learning any academic subjects'. It is interesting to note that research studies on Akita's prefecture's success have noted that academic achievement of students have never been the most important priority of schools, rather, their focus for the past 40 years have been to equip students with transversal competencies. The UNESCO report states that the focus of educational policies and strategies in Akita prefecture is happiness and well-being rather than academic achievements which has led to excellent learning outcomes in national assessments. From this example, we can deduce that happiness and well-being of students can influence the growth of a learner more than regular assessments.

**Penn Resilience Program in UK schools**

Penn Resilience Program (originally developed by a team of psychologists at the University of Pennsylvania) has been implemented in UK schools since 2007. It started with an aim to prevent adolescent depression, but over the years, its scope has broadened to include resilience and promote realistic thinking, adaptive coping skills and social problem-solving in children (Challen et al., 2010). The program focuses on developing six resilience competencies: emotional intelligence, impulse control, optimistic thinking, flexible and accurate thinking, self-efficacy and connecting with others. It was delivered in 18 (one-hour) sessions to groups of 6-30 students in separate classes as part of the regular timetable. Teachers introduce concepts through skits, discussion, quizzes, role plays in hypothetical scenarios and didactic instruction. Students are then encouraged to apply these skills in their own day-to-day experiences (Gillham et al., 2013).

Seligman et al. (2009) highlight that PRP curriculum is designed to increase students' ability to handle day-to-day stressors and problems during adolescence. They write "It promotes optimism by teaching students to think more realistically and flexibly about the problems they encounter. PRP also teaches assertiveness, creative brainstorming, decision making, relaxation, and several other coping and problem-solving skills" (p.297). PRP is based on two major elements: cognitive skills and problem-solving (Gillham et al., 2013). Students are taught to identify their own emotions, monitor their interpretations through self-talk and identify patterns in their own thinking that may be pessimistic or inaccurate. The objective of these exercises is to obstruct self-defeating thought and behaviour patterns. Gillham et al. (2013) in their study of PRP cite an example, "Pessimistic beliefs (e.g., "I'm stupid") often lead to

maladaptive behaviors (e.g., not studying), which then increase the likelihood of negative outcomes (e.g., poor grades)" (p.618). Therefore, this program when taught to students in adolescent years can help them defeat negativity and overcome pessimistic beliefs. One of the activities performed in classes is – students submit everyday problems anonymously in a class 'problem pool' and teachers outline examples to teach students how to use the skill and practise it (Penn Resilience Programme Guidebook). PRP adopts a five-step approach to problem-solving which is derived from Dodge's and Crick's (1990) social information processing model. Students are taught to undertake a five step process when a problem arises in their life:

"(1) stop and think, especially about their goals,
(2) evaluate the situation (look for clues, consider others' perspectives),
(3) brainstorm about solutions creatively (generate a list of possible solutions),
(4) decide what to do (consider the pros and cons of different options and how they affect short- & long-term goals), &
(5) go for the goal (enact the solution & evaluate the outcome; if the solution didn't work try the process again)" (Gillham et al., 2013, p.619).

These are practical steps which can help students to apply cognitive skills such as flexibility, accuracy and critical thinking in real-life situations. The group format of this program also helps create a 'nurturing social environment' which enables students to seek and receive support from teachers and build inter-personal skills by supporting peers in the group.

Over the years, a considerable amount of research (controlled trials) has been conducted in diverse racial/ethnic communities. Review of literature suggests PRP has helped protect children from symptoms of anxiety and depression and had a positive impact on their behaviour. It has reduced hopelessness and increased optimism (Brunwasser & Gillham, 2008) and significant gain in mental health and wellbeing of pupils (Challen et al., 2010). The skills cultivated through this program have found to be applicable in contexts other than academic, such as social interactions with family & peers.

**Bhutan – Educating for Gross National Happiness**

Bhutan has pioneered the discussions around happiness & development. In 2010, Bhutan's Ministry of Education implemented "Educating for Gross National Happiness (GNH)" programme which promotes happiness & well-being among learners. The notion of GNH contradicts the dominant indicator of progress "Gross Domestic Product" used in most countries across the world. The Bhutan's Education Blueprint (2014-2024) aims to create "an educated and enlightened society of GNH", build "positive school culture" & promote "learner's holistic development". GNH values & principles are imparted through: "meditation & mind training, infusing GNH values into the curriculum, holistic assessment of students, broader learning environment, & media literacy & critical thinking skills" (Ministry of Education [Bhutan], 2014, p.84). The aim is to enable every student in every school to develop nine "student attributes (outcomes)": knowledge and understanding, intellectual competence, communicative competence, enduring habits of life-long learning, family, community and national values, spirituality & character, physical wellbeing, leadership competence & world-readiness (Ministry of Education [Bhutan], 2014). Teaching practices are not limited to just teaching GNH values rather the content of subjects is designed in a way that enables students to implement them in daily life. For instance,

teachers stress on the importance of protecting lifegiving elements such as air, water, fire, & soil & instruct students to provide adequate care & prevent destruction of these elements (Drupka & Brien, 2013).

The Ministry of Education conceptualised and implemented a unique initiative called the 'Green Schools for a Green Bhutan' which focuses on enabling learners to conserve & learn with the environment (Ministry of Education [Bhutan], 2014). Eight GNH indicators are used in order to establish a positive correlation between the dual objective of conserving & learning with the environment: naturally or environmentally green, intellectual greenery, academic greenery, social greenery, cultural greenery, spiritual greenery, aesthetic greenery, moral greenery (Drakpa & Dorji, 2013). Such initiatives have led to behavioural changes in teachers and students, improvement in physical ambience of schools, renewed interest in games & club activities & respect for culture, tradition & nature (Ministry of Education, 2014, p.85). The UNESCO (2016) report states that initiatives like the 'Green Schools for a Green Bhutan' are examples of how national education policies can be appropriate and directly applicable at the school level.

# IV. MAPPING HAPPINESS CLASSES IN THE UNESCO HAPPY SCHOOLS FRAMEWORK (2016)

The Happiness Curriculum is delivered through a 45-minute "happiness class" for students from Nursery to Grade 8 (age group: 3-14-year-olds) in Delhi government schools. Preferably, the first period in a day, it focuses on three main components: mindfulness, story-telling sessions and activity-oriented discussions and reflections in classrooms (Care et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2019).

Mindfulness: In the Indian knowledge system such as Vipassana in Buddhist traditions, mindful reading was given more importance than memorizing facts (Sisodia, 2019). Mindful meditation enables children to learn how to focus and be attentive to their thoughts, feelings, and emotions. By being aware of their own emotions, students can improve their concentration in studies and improve inter-personal relationships in classrooms and at home. Practicing mindfulness regularly helps in training minds of students to focus on how the thoughts enter or leave their minds without judging them.

Storytelling: The content of these stories is inspirational in nature but not meant to teach moral values to students. Instead, the stories are based on local context of the students which make the characters and situations relatable. The stories are followed by discussions which make children think, reflect and decide for themselves what their reaction could be if something similar happened in their lives. The aim is to help develop emotional quotient of children through these stories. There are no moral science lessons, chanting or praying or any activities that excite children momentarily in happiness classes (Sisodia, 2019).



*Photo Credits: Delhi Government*

Activity-oriented discussions and expression: Students are encouraged to analyse, understand and evaluate their thought processes. Topics such as desires, emotions, trust, gratitude feature in these activities (Sisodia, 2019). For instance, in one of the activities, students are asked to express their gratitude towards family members, teachers and friends by writing a few lines, poems which are then put up on a 'gratitude wall'. These activities enable students to express their emotions, feelings and views without hesitation in classrooms.

The above listed elements of the Happiness Curriculum are aligned to the three broad categories, people, process and place for 'happy schools' in the UNESCO Happy Schools Framework (2016). This report titled "Happy Schools: A Framework for Learner Well-Being in the Asia Pacific" urged policymakers to think beyond academic domains and focus on the quality of learning. It called for education systems across the world to shift away from the traditional measures to recognize values, strengths and competencies that can enhance happiness of children. This report was the first of its kind in documenting innovative practices being implemented by schools to promote happiness and well-being of learners in the Asia-Pacific region. There are 22 criteria under the three broad categories: people, process and place (see Table 1 below).

Table 1. The Happy Schools Criteria (UNESCO, 2016, p.37)

| People | Process | Place |
|---|---|---|
| Friendships & relationships in the school community | Reasonable & fair workload | Warm & friendly learning environment |
| Positive teacher attitudes & attributes | Teamwork & collaborative spirit | Secure environment free from bullying |
| Respect for diversity & differences | Fun & engaging teaching & learning approaches | Open & green learning & playing spaces |
| Positive & collaborative values & practices | Learner freedom, creativity, & engagement | School vision & leadership |
| Teacher working conditions & well-being | Sense of achievement & accomplishment | Positive discipline |
| Teacher skills and competencies | Extra-curricular activities & school events | Good health, sanitation, & nutrition |
| | Learning as a team between students & teachers | Democratic school management |
| | Useful, relevant, & engaging learning content | |
| | Mental well-being & stress management | |

*Direct outcome of HC*    *Indirect outcome of HC*    *Not an indicator of HC*

The philosophical underpinnings of the happiness curriculum and the activities undertaken in happiness classes reflect the three categories and criteria of 'happy schools' as described in the UNESCO Happy Schools Framework (2016). The coloured text in Table 1 illustrate which of the 'happy schools' criteria are directly, indirectly or not reflected as the outcomes of objectives and practices of the happiness curriculum.

*Direct outcome:* Storytelling and activity-based reflections in happiness classes are practices in line with the 'people' category in the concept of 'happy schools. Happiness curriculum is focused on enabling students to experience 'deeper happiness' by strengthening their friendships and relationships. The 'value' of a relationship is determined by the feelings we experience in our relationships. The stories in the curriculum are a means to let students reflect on the importance of their relationships with others in life and ponder about building positive and collaborative values and practices in their lives. These practices are not just limited to students, but teachers are also encouraged to develop skills and competencies through trainings and sessions and become happy role models for students. In this framework, 'process' refers to the teaching and learning methods adopted in schools. Central to the happiness curriculum is teaching mindfulness techniques to students and helping them learn the benefits of it from a young age. Mindfulness is an extremely useful tool to promote mental wellbeing and manage and reduce stress for students and teachers. Happiness classes are not just an isolated program being implemented in Delhi government schools. It has created a ripple effect and turned schools into 'places' which provide a warm and friendly learning environment to students. In contrast to the existing structured pedagogical methods adopted in subject classes, teachers use fun and engaging teaching and learning approaches in happiness classes.

*Indirect outcome:* There is no right or wrong answer to questions at the end of each storytelling session in happiness classes. Students have the freedom to express themselves and the non-judgemental approach adopted by teachers is instrumental in promoting engagement among learners. Group activities help in promoting teamwork and a collaborative spirit. Teachers have become more approachable and students more comfortable in expressing themselves without any hesitation outside of the happiness classes as well. This has increased the trust factor in schools which indirectly creates a safer environment to address issues like bullying. The discussions on real-life situations through stories and reflections have broadened the purpose of attending school. It is no longer limited to acquiring knowledge of certain subjects and reproducing it in exams. Since, there are no textbooks (only teachers use a reference guidebook) and exams associated with happiness classes, there is an indirect impact in reducing the workload on teachers and students. Happiness classes have provided students with a platform to share their feelings and learn about methods which can help them deal with real-life challenges as well. Each student is encouraged to participate in discussions in happiness classes. This promotes confidence among learners to participate in extracurricular activities and organise school events as well.

*Not an indicator:* In these criteria's, there is scope for more work to be done. The happiness curriculum and its activities should not be limited to being a stand-alone program and include the school management, head of schools, teachers, parents and students alike. The system is still dominated by the competitive exam-oriented outlook. Just like the happiness classes, other academic subjects should be taught in a fun and engaging manner. The sense of accomplishment among students and teachers should not be limited to the performances in examinations. More ways need to be devised which can enable them to feel content with their achievements by building a culture of appreciation within schools. The content

The content of lessons and activities should address the prevailing class, caste, linguistic and cultural differences in Indian society and promote respect for diverse views and perspectives. Green learning and playing spaces are crucial to students' happiness and efforts need to be made in that direction. Dedicated efforts towards health and sanitation facilities are also equally important to ensure schools are safe spaces. To develop a holistic approach to education in a universal context, educational reform must include efforts to ensure the impact of happiness classes translate into 'happy schools' as well.

# HAPPINESS CLASSES – VOICES FROM THE GROUND



*Photo Credits: Delhi Government*

*"During the lockdown as schools were closed, online happiness classes kept my daughter engaged in learning. When the classes started, she was not sure if she wanted to be part of it as her classmates did not join the online classes. But after attending just three classes, she has been eagerly waiting to log in for every class. There is a change in my daughter's behaviour. To count some, she has now begun to help me with the housework, which earlier she never paid interest in. My daughter started talking more politely and is calmer while talking now. I was surprised that my daughter was confident in responding during the classes. Even in a room full of people, she not just confidently responds but also asks questions."*

~Anita Sharma (Parent)

*"My daughter has topped in all her grades. She is perfect in every sense to me except for her eating habits. It was during one of the happiness class discussions, my daughter was able to reflect on her eating habits and think about what I have been telling her. It was the teacher's approach that allowed her to share about her eating habits and the reflections helped her to then accept that her eating habits need to be changed. Now my daughter has started eating a little healthy but there is scope for more improvement. I credit this change in my daughter's attitude to the happiness classes."*

~Usha Devi (Parent)

*"Before my involvement in the Happiness Curriculum, I saw any additional task given to me as a burden which simply added to my stress and in that process, I could never produce my best work. Rather, I spent most of my time thinking of the task that was given to me, now I think that energy could have been used in doing the task. The Happiness Curriculum has allowed me to take what comes my way, not as an additional task but as a step that I accept and own. Happiness classes differ from the age-old value education classes because it is conducted regularly with students and the biggest difference is its bend towards real-life situations. The curriculum is beautifully designed as each activity involves a section where students can share what they think which is accepted without any judgment. These classes provide a space for students to listen, reflect and express."*

~Ritu (English Teacher & Happiness Coordinator)

# HAPPINESS CLASSES – VOICES FROM THE GROUND



*Photo Credits: Delhi Government*

*"Initially, I thought happiness classes to be like the value education classes but once I started attending, I discovered that the stories and activities had more for me than just a moral story. I enjoy the discussions after the story is shared as every student gets a chance to participate and the questions allow us to think. Earlier, I was extremely shy in front of my teachers and got scared if my teacher asked me a question. The politeness and acceptance with which our happiness teacher interacts with the whole class has allowed most of my classmates to express themselves. Now I am no longer hesitant in responding and asking questions. This has also helped me to express more to my father. I practice mindfulness to calm down whenever I am angry. Earlier, I often got into fights with either my sister or friends whenever I got angry. But now I try to reason out if fighting is the profitable way and choose to talk it out".*

~Tapashya Sharma, BPSKV, Sangam Vihar, Class 6 (Student)

*"Happiness classes are fun and are for everyone! This fun comes from the intermixing of different topics through the medium of stories, discussions after the stories where we are asked what would we would have done, it comes from the consistency in these classes every week (unlike other subject classes that do not have real time interaction from teachers), to have a teacher who would not scold rather appreciate the uniqueness in our responses, from the freedom to express and the assurance that my teacher will listen to me with patience, respect and without any judgement. Fun is the freedom to think and share when no answers are considered wrong."*

~Neha Giri, BPSKV, Devli, Sangam VIhar, Class 6 (Student)

*"I used to be nervous while talking to others and was afraid that what I say might be wrong but, my teacher from Happiness classes told me that nothing is wrong or right during these classes and so, I stopped hesitating and started sharing without fear because now I know that my teacher will make me understand why I am wrong. Now, I want to be the first person to answer in the class. I have become more responsible and ensure that I complete all the tasks that are being sent via WhatsApp during the lockdown. Happiness classes have given me a new lease of confidence".*

~Gurmeet, Class 8, Bachpan Prasad Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalay, Deoli (Student)
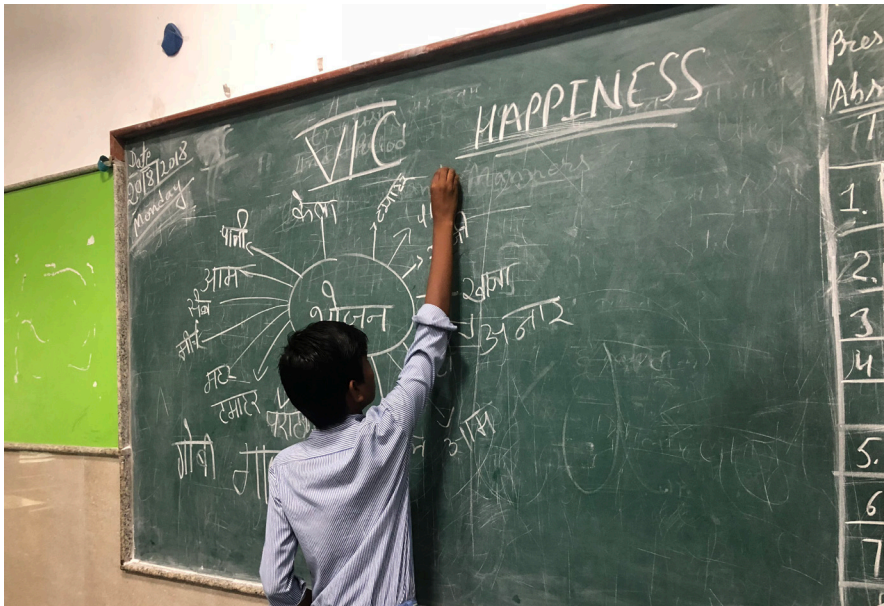
# HAPPINESS CLASSES – VOICES FROM THE GROUND



*Photo Credits: Delhi Government*

> *"I used to be very naughty and concentrated less on my studies but after doing mindfulness exercises in happiness classes, it helped me to concentrate on various things, especially my studies. Now I practice mindfulness in my regular routine whenever I gets time. Mindfulness helps me to stay in the present and be more conscious. I am able to focus and concentrate more on my studies and have improved a lot in academics."*
>
> ~Rounak, Class 7, RPVV Hari Nagar (Student)

> *"I used to be isolated and barely spoke to my classmates in 8th standard. Happiness classes helped me to open up. I remember the day when my teacher took up a happiness class activity on Padhna Likhna Kyun? (Why do we need to study?). I opened up for the first time and said that I want to become a Doctor since I lost my mother due to health issues. Since then, I gradually started participating more in the class and portrayed positive behaviour towards my classmates. I have also improved in my academic subjects."*
>
> ~Rashmi, Class 9, S.K.V Gazipur School (Student)

> *"Mindfulness activities have helped me to monitor my anger. Earlier, if anyone from my family asked me to do something, I would get angry and always speak in a very bad tone with them. But after engaging in mindfulness sessions and discussions in happiness classes, I try to keep my cool, listen first and not react with anger. I have started to help my mother with the household work which I earlier ignored. I feel that most of the time, I was not even conscious of the effort my mother was putting in all day to maintain the house. I give credit to the stories shared by the teacher followed by the discussions during happiness classes which have made me realise the importance of being thankful to others and helping them."*
>
> ~Harshit, Class 4 (Student)

# HAPPINESS CLASSES – VOICES FROM THE GROUND



*Photo Credits: Delhi Government*



*Photo Credits: Delhi Government*

*"Earlier, if someone explained a certain topic, I would receive it well but not ask questions on my own. Happiness classes have enabled me to think critically. Now I constantly have a question about the things I see around - be it my home, school, market, or any other place. I am curious to know why a particular object was created and what is its purpose. My thoughts and curiosity have also motivated me to write poetry. I recently wrote a poem on the frontline warriors of COVID-19 pandemic."*
~Shweta, Class 8, Sarvodaya Co-ed Senior Secondary School, Masjid Moth (Student)

*"I always associated studies with fear. This fear was either for not asking the "correct" question or not giving the "correct" answer. This led to a lack of interest in studies which was accompanied by the fear of "failing" in the classroom. The methods used in happiness classes, the teacher's reassurance that there are no wrong answers and questions came to her rescue. It helped her gain that missing confidence and motivated her to participate in learning without any kind of fear."*
~Nisha, Class 6, Bachpan Prasad Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalay, Deoli (Student)

# V. HAPPINESS CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK: LEARNING OUTCOMES, CURRICULUM ANALYSIS AND MEASUREMENT TOOLS

Brookings Institution partnered with Dream a Dream to publish a report titled "Development of Student and teacher measures of happiness curriculum factors" (Care et al., 2020). In addition to providing an overview of the intended learning outcomes, curriculum analysis and measurement tools from this report, we also present some findings which have not been shared in the public domain before.

**Learning outcomes**

The intended learning outcomes of the Happiness Curriculum (HC) are listed in Table 2. It is noteworthy that some of these outcomes can be hypothesised as direct effects of the HC, while others are indirect. For example, scheduled classes on mindfulness are a feature of the HC and could reasonably be expected to generate changes in student and teacher perceptions due to their explicit nature. Links of such direct effects to improved academic performance in general, or comprehension in particular, are more tenuous. These outcomes will be a function not only of influences such as the HC but also of the past learning performance and individual characteristics of students.

**Table 2. Intended learning outcomes**

| 1. Ability to be mindful and attentive |
| --- |
| **1.1 Develops increased level of self-awareness and mindfulness** <br> *1.2 Comprehends subject matter clearly* <br> *1.3 Reflects better performance in academics and extracurricular activities* <br> *1.4 Shows increased interest in studies* <br> **1.5 Develops active listening (e.g., with teachers, family and peers)** <br> **1.6 Focuses and sustains attention on the current task (e.g., on academics, sports and arts), thereby reducing distractions** <br> 1.7 Remains in the present, i.e., aware of what is happening within themselves & in the surrounding environment <br> 1.8 Monitors and is mindful of actions and thinks before acting |
| **2. Critical thinking and reflection** |
| **2.1 Observes self and others better** <br> **2.2 Develops strong ability to reflect on one's thoughts and behaviours** <br> *2.3 Thinks critically and does not believe without evaluation* <br> *2.4 Operates in a resolution-centric way* <br> *2.5 Reflects clarity of choices and is able to choose and decide authentically* <br> *2.6 Thinks beyond stereotypes and assumptions* <br> 2.7 Thinks innovatively and executes work creatively |

| 3. Social-Emotional skills |
| --- |
| 3.1 Demonstrates empathy (understands feelings of others, sees situations from own as well as others' perspectives and responds appropriately)<br>3.2 Understands expectations in relationships<br>*3.3 Deals with stress and anxiety*<br>*3.4 Identifies, reflects on and takes mindful actions in difficult circumstances*<br>3.5 Makes and maintains relationships and resolves conflict in an appropriate manner<br>**3.6 Develops better communication and expression skills** |
| **4. Confident & pleasant personality** |
| *4.1 Develops balanced outlook in daily life*<br>*4.2 Reflects self-confidence with pleasant behaviour*<br>*4.3 Reflects awareness of health, cleanliness and hygiene*<br>4.4 Appreciates self, family, others and environment<br>*4.5 Becomes more responsible* |

**Key**
- Italics show the subscales which are minimally reflected in sample HC lesson plans.
- Bold font shows the subscales which are most strongly reflected in sample HC lesson plans.
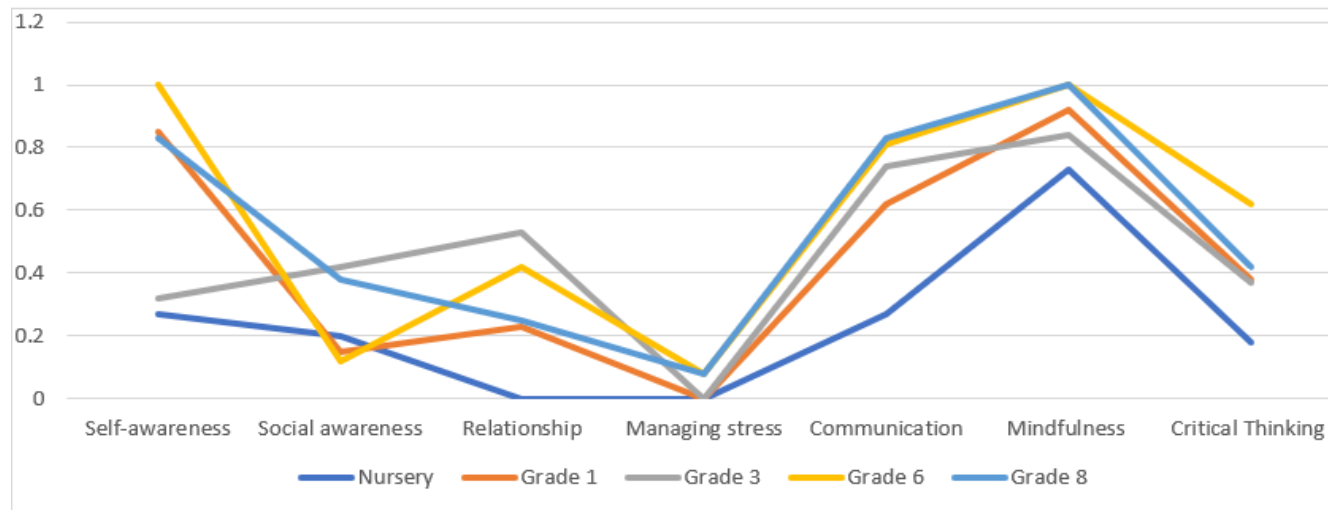
## Curriculum Analysis

The happiness curriculum was analysed to explore the degree to which these intended learning outcomes were reflected in lesson plans. Lesson plans were selected across levels from Nursery to Grade 8, with the topics and their stated objectives and guidelines for teachers. These representative plans were analysed to identify how they mapped to the stated objectives of the HC, as well as how they reflected the intended learning outcomes. The analysis consisted of an audit of the lesson plans to note the intended objectives and the contributing skills required to complete the lessons. The audit was completed by two raters and then compared for consistency. There are differences in the degree to which the various factors and learning outcomes are reflected across lesson plans within and across grade levels.

The factors of self-awareness, communication and mindfulness are those most strongly represented across the curriculum, as Figure 2 shows. HC factors are represented least overall at the Nursery level and somewhat less at Grade 1.

In brief:

- *Self-awareness* is increasingly evident from Nursery through Grades 6-8.
- *Social awareness* is strongest in Grades 3 and 8.
- *Relationship* is strongest in Grades 3 and 6.
- *Managing stress* is not represented strongly across all grades at all.
- *Communication* appears across all grades and is particularly strong in Grades 6 and 8.
- *Mindfulness* is strong across all grades.
- *Critical thinking* varies across grades but is strongest in Grade 6.

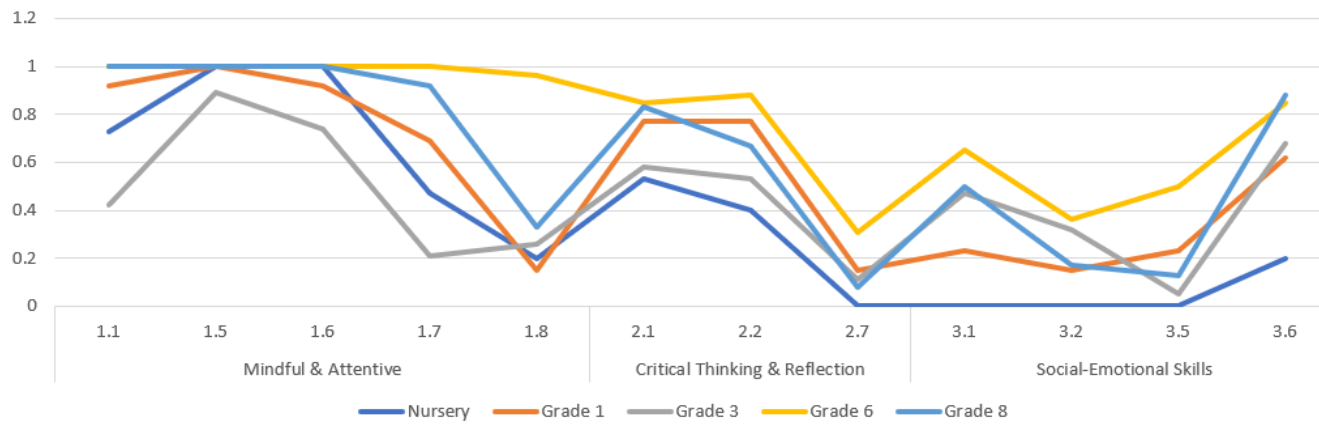**Figure 2 Presence of Happiness Curriculum factors in lesson plans**



## Learning Outcomes and Curriculum Analysis

Representation of the learning outcomes is complex due to the deconstruction of the four sets of learning outcomes into subsets (Table 2). Within each of the four sets, representation of subsets varies. Those subsets shown in italics in Table 2 are almost non-existent in the curriculum analysis across all grade levels. For the remaining subsets, there are some interesting differences both within set and within grade levels. The subsets in bold font in Table 2 are those that are found most frequently. Some variations are seen across grades; typically, these variations take the form of greater presence in the higher grade levels. Therefore, subsets in the mindful & attentive and critical thinking & reflection sets are most evident, with the final subset (3.6) of social-emotional skills also notable, apart from at the Nursery level.

Figure 3 includes only those intended learning outcomes that are evidenced in the curriculum. Notable is the relative invisibility of most subscales within the Confident and pleasant personality scale. One subset (not shown in Figure 3), appreciates self, family, others and the environment, is visible through the lesson plans and is linked substantively with the areas of self-awareness, social-awareness, relationships and communication.

**Figure 3 Presence of intended learning outcomes in lesson plans**



| 1.1 Develops increased level of self-awareness & mindfulness<br><br>1.5 Develops active listening<br><br>1.6 Focuses & sustains attention on the current task, thereby reducing distractions<br><br>1.7 Remains in the present<br><br>1.8 Monitors & is mindful of actions & thinks before acting | 2.1 Observes self & others better<br><br>2.2 Develops strong ability to reflect on one's thoughts & behaviurs<br><br>2.7 Thinks innovatively & executes work creatively | 3.1 Demonstrates empathy<br><br>3.2 Understands expectations in relationships<br><br>3.5 Makes & maintains relationships & resolves conflict appropriately<br><br>3.6 Develops better communication & expression skills |
|---|---|---|

The Happiness Curriculum rests on two key clusters involving human characteristics and competencies. A useful summary of these clusters and their relationships is provided in Figure 4. These illustrates the cross-over between cognitive and social competencies in the individual, together with how each of these inform the other.

**Figure 4. Structural conceptualisation of Happiness Curriculum**
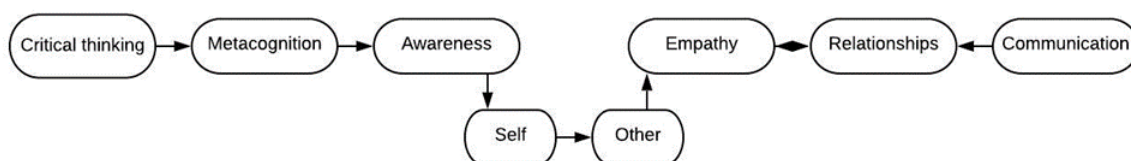
**Measuring Happiness: The Development of a Happiness Tool**

The Brookings Institution in partnership with Dream a Dream have developed measures[1] that can assess the happiness curriculum by looking at whether there are changes in teacher and student behaviours attributable to the curriculum. Three processes were undertaken in the development of a measure to identify HC values among students and teachers. First, analysis of the curriculum was undertaken; followed by group interviews with students and teachers; and finally, item and scale development, informed by the first two processes.

There are several challenges when it comes to measuring happiness. Happiness is an imprecise, multi-faceted, and subjective concept that is difficult to facilitate measurement. For this work, three challenges were particularly salient. Happiness is an imprecise, multifaceted, and subjective term that is difficult to facilitate measurement.

- The first challenge is the broadness of the goals of the happiness curriculum & its description of relevant factors.
- Situational approach taken in this study: predictions of behaviors, as opposed to perceptions
- Students and teachers were asked to provide their likely emotional, social, cognitive, or behavioral responses to hypothetical situations, rather than to make evaluative or judgmental statements about themselves.

To address these challenges, following assessment approach were followed

- Item development was guided by the learning context and curriculum
- The rationale for the study needed to be communicated well to participants
- The item development was situated in scenarios that were valid for both students and teachers while able to reflect the different role positions of the two groups.

**Happiness Tool for Teachers and Students**

Items were reviewed in terms of their individual distributions and on how they contributed to their loading on a priori hypothesised scales through analysis of reliability coefficients and item clustering.

For the students, the final set of items includes 14 of the original 24. For the teacher scales, because of both the initial item-level analyses and the relationships analyses, the final set of items numbered 13 of the original 21. These 13 items consistently clustered formed the final scales. The psychometric properties of the test show reliability of 0.5 -0.6 range (Hair et al., 2006) for these scales. The results are regarded as sufficiently strong to justify item use in larger populations.

The interpretability of the information is prioritised, taking into consideration the need to establish the face validity of the survey. This aspect of face validity is particularly important for the stakeholder user group and has been used as a key criterion for item review.

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*3 If you are interested in learning more about the Happiness tool prepared by Brookings and Dream a Dream, please contact us at info@ dreamadream.org*

**Happiness Tool – Student version**

The final set of items includes 14 of the original 24. The final scales are Decisionmaking, Focus, Empathy and Relationships.

**Student Scale Competencies include**

| Competencies | | Scale Descriptions | Items |
|---|---|---|---|
| Decision making | DM | Making decisions by reviewing the situation & assessing alternative actionsl requires insight about one's possible emotional & cognitive reactions | 4 |
| Focus | FOC | Being self-aware and focussed, demonstrating self-control and managing frustration and impulsive reactions | 4 |
| Empathy | EMP | Thinking of & considering the other; understanding the emotions that another person may experience | 4 |
| Relationships | REL | Taking the perspectives of others into consideration in the context of relationship maintenance and facilitation | 2 |

**Happiness Tool – Teacher version**

For teachers, the final competencies are: encouraging metacognition, student-centred classroom management, facilitating relationships, and considering empathy. These are all well-represented in the happiness factors and in the intended learning outcomes

| Competencies | | Scale Descriptions | Items |
|---|---|---|---|
| Metacognition | MET | Encouraging student metacognition | 4 |
| Management | MAN | Student-centred classroom management | 3 |
| Relationships | REL | Facilitating how students relate to each other in conflict situations | 4 |
| Empathy | EMP | Considering students' emotional and cognitive responses in difficult circumstances | 2 |

# RECOMMENDATIONS

Trainings: Happiness trainings is as important as subject trainings. We recommend increasing the frequency of trainings for teachers to ensure there is effective implementation of the program. These training sessions should have a forum for feedback from teachers who are delivering this curriculum. Principals should also be part of trainings so that they are able to understand the importance of happiness classes.

Happiness Classes to Happy Schools: The happiness curriculum should not be limited to being a stand-alone programme. Rather, the school vision, policies and activities should adopt a holistic approach which promote happiness and well-being of children.

Addressing Measurement challenges: While it is essential to measure the effectiveness of this intervention, the challenges lie in identifying the specific objectives and the techniques adopted to achieve them. Although self-reporting in psychometric tests is the most used method for measuring social-emotional competencies, it runs the risk of social response bias. Also, the understanding of a concept like happiness is subjective in nature and is experienced in varying degrees among individuals. It is challenging to measure this accurately. We need to devise new and different methods to gain a deeper understanding of how the happiness curriculum is changing mindsets of people.

Future research: Future research can be directed towards theorizing the curriculum, generating empirical evidence on its effectiveness, discussion and reflections around its implementation and a thorough review of the content of curriculum, especially the nature of the stories, by educationist and other stakeholders to understand its cohesiveness with respect to pedagogical techniques used in happiness classes.

Dissemination: There needs to be larger discussions on the impact of an initiative like the happiness curriculum in a system still dominated by rigid examination system and emphasis on learning outcomes. Policymakers, educators, parents and students need to be involved in the conversations around social and emotional learning, happiness and wellbeing. Towards this, engaging in dissemination activities such as exhibitions at schools, conferences/webinars to engage educators and practitioners and exchange of best practices with international partners can be useful.

# CONCLUSION

Delhi educational reform focuses on reimagining the purpose of education for each child. Happiness Curriculum is a notable intervention in this regard which has led to a remarkable shift from the emphasis on learning outcomes to happiness of students. This report provides an insight into the theoretical approaches to happiness education in the Eastern and Western societies and the relevance of the happiness curriculum with respect to the UNESCO Happy Schools Framework (2016). While the real impact of the happiness curriculum will be visible in the years to come, current efforts need to be directed towards ensuring consistent review of the happiness curriculum and adopting practices which promote learning as a joyful experience for students and redefines the true meaning of success to include thriving of students.

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# ANNEXURE

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