Mind Over Material
Prioritizing Mental health of learners in the classroom

Dr. Deepalee A Mahida

E-Mail Id- deepalimahida@gmail.com
Associate Professor,
M B Patel College of Education , Sardar Patel University ,Vallabh Vidyanagar

Abstract:

The world today has witnessed unprecedented changes in every walk of life. The spectrum of Human being's development is infinite. From amphibian age to atom age, man's progress is just beyond words. With the success stories of mission Moon to mission Mars, there are also unheard agonies of human heart. The quantum leap of human mind has caused serious issues of mental health. Thinking of mental health of new age learners is of prime importance for a classroom practitioner. The famous dictum 'sound mind in a sound body' equally positions importance of wellbeing and mental health with physical health. Today's learners are exposed to a number of varied realities and with that comes issues of mental health. A teacher needs to perform the duties of a facilitator, guide and co participant of the activities in the classroom process so that learners learn.
This study paper aims to address the need for mental health issues of learners and teacher's role to provide conducive climate in the classroom for the learners. The focus is on creating care cocoons for wellness and mental health of learners.

Key Words: *Mental Health, Facilitator, conducive classroom climate, care cacoons*

Introduction:

Human beings are blessed with connection of a mind-body. This means our mental, physical, and social health affect each other. For students, mental health is important because it affects their learning and participation in school. Mental health affects students' ability to learn in school, academic achievement, ability to build positive relationships, physical health, and stress management. This means understanding student mental health is more critical than ever.

1.1 Concept of Mental Health:

A person's mentally health presents varied dimensions like physical, social, emotional and psychological wellbeing of an individual. If an individual is facing issues in anyone of these dimensions, that can lead to issues in other dimensions also. According to World Health Organisation "Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community."

It is an inevitable component of health and well-being that emphasize our individual and collective abilities to make decisions, build relationships and shape the world we live in. Mental health is a basic human right. And it is crucial to personal, community and socio-economic development.

1.2 Converting Classrooms into Care Cocoons: Need of the hour

Today's learners are the world in a bowl . They come from different social'financial religious and cultural background. Hence their mental make up and mindset also varies. It is the duty of the teacher to consider all these facets of learners' background and according manage content and conduct management .

Cherishing the dream of becoming a "master teacher" is all pervasive in teacher fraternity. We all enjoy the images of enthralled students enthusiastically participating in our classes. It generates feelings of proud and self-esteem while reflecting on "The teacher's Motto'. It goes like this: "A hundred years from now some things won't matter how much money is there in my bank account, the size of the house in which I live or the kind of car I drove around... but the world will be a better place because I was important in the life of a child."

The question is: If this is the motto, why some teachers get mean, nasty, ornery and at times vicious in their approach to learners. The present paper aims at exploring new perspective of the concept of classroom management skills with special reference to discipline of the learners and taking care of mental health. The present proficiency in the use of positive and effective classroom management strategies has a profound impact on our satisfaction and success with teaching. The confluence of knowledge and skills assures the effective management of classrooms.

1.3 Classroom management as a key for sound mental health of students

Weber (1977) has defined classroom management as "...that set of activities by which the teacher promotes appropriate student behaviour and eliminates inappropriate student behaviour. develops good interpersonal relationships and a positive socio-emotional climate in the classroom, and establishes and maintains an effective and productive classroom organization." (page 286).The crux of the above definition is:

1. Create more of the "good" behavior

2. Get rid of the "bad" behavior

3. Have positive and caring interactions with our students

4. Create a classroom in which kids feel welcomed, valued, befriended, useful, challenged, respected, and physically and psychologically safe

5. Be structured, organized, and efficient.

Classroom management is the kernal for encouraging and establishing student self-control through a process of promoting positive student achievement and behavior. Classroom Management Focuses on two major Components (1) Content Management (2)Conduct Management Content management "does not refer to skills peculiar to teaching a particular subject but rather to those skills that cut across subjects and activities" (Froyen& Iverson, 1999, p. 128). Doyle stressed that the core of instructional management is gaining and maintaining student cooperation in learning activities (as cited in Froyen& Iverson, 1999, p. 128).

According to Iverson and Froyen (1999), conduct management is essential to the creation of a foundation for "an orderly, task-oriented approach to teaching and learning" (p. 217), thus leading to granting students greater independence and autonomy through socialization.

1.4 Role of Parents and Teachers in Sustaining Mental Health of Learners

Parents and teachers bring different perspectives to the table. Our teachers spend many hours working with individual children and can provide insight into a child's strengths and weaknesses.

Parents see their children in a variety of settings, which may not be possible for teachers. It is important that parents and teachers work together. Together they can help students have positive experiences at school and develop the skills they need to succeed in school and life.

1.5 Redefining Quality Schools : The Base of Mental Health of Learners

Quality schools are defined by teacher effectiveness and student achievement under the auspices of building strong interpersonal skills. In this light, teacher and student relationships are essential to ensuring a positive school/classroom atmosphere. Classroom management discipline problems can be dealt with either on an individual basis (between teacher and student) or by group problem solving (class meetings). As a healthy bond builds up between teacher and students, the latter are gradually released from teacher supervision by becoming individually responsible. This is how both "educators and students become co-participants in the teaching- learning process, striving to make the most of themselves and their collective experience" (Froyen& Iverson, 1999, p. 256).

Conclusion:

The teacher's Motto in reflected in the following utterance consolidates role of educators in promoting well being of learners. "A hundred years from now ,some things won't matter -how much money is there in my bank account, the size of the house in which I live or the kind of car I drove around… but the world will be a better place because I was important in the life of a child."

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