



Happiness Curriculum: Need of the Generation to balance life with Virtual Education

Hema Upadhyay,

Research Scholar, Faculty of Education, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi.

&

Dr. Sunita Singh,

Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi.

Abstract-

Technology and virtual platforms have occupied quite an important place in the lives of human beings. Virtual platforms cover every extent which influences the routine of any person and one of the essential parts is education. After the outbreak of the pandemic, the use of virtual platforms for teaching learning has become dominant. This paper explores various aspects of virtual education and its impact on the lifestyle of students. Through multiple reviews, it has been found that obsession with virtual reality may disturb the real life of a person. To maintain a balance between the real and virtual life of the younger generation the education system should be strong enough to lead towards the right path. Curriculum plays the role of a fundamental component in the education system, therefore it should be designed in such a manner that it leads towards the well-being of students. One such curriculum that promotes well-being among students is the Happiness Curriculum of Delhi Government launched on 2nd July 2018. It is a compulsory 40-minute class comprising mindful practices, storytelling, activities, and self-expression. According to Happiness Curriculum Framework (2019), "The schools in India need to implement a curriculum which not only promotes development in cognition, language, literacy, numeracy, and the arts but also addresses wellbeing and happiness of the students." This paper focuses on the Happiness curriculum as a need in the current situation for the betterment of the upcoming generation.

Keywords: Happiness Curriculum, Virtual Education, Virtual World, Well-Being, Education.

Introduction:

"Virtual reality is a denial of reality. We need to be open to the powers of imagination, which brings something useful to reality. Virtual reality can imprison people."

(Rare Gallery Wallpaper, n.d.)

Today the whole world seems to be connected where we can easily exchange our views, knowledge, culture, tradition, and customs, and gain information about whatever we require within the blink of an eye. Thanks to the technology and various virtual platforms that have made the accessibility to gain the above-mentioned information easy. There is no such phase of life that has been untouched



by technology and one of them is education. The crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the whole world and it became completely impossible to continue education in traditional methods during that scenario. At that time technology played the role of savior for almost everyone especially the world of learners. Since then learning through virtual platforms has become a popular trend and need with time.

However, it has been found that over-dependency on virtual platforms among youngsters is becoming quite dangerous which results in disastrous situations. The loss of connection from the real world and over-obsession with the virtual world has put their life and future in threat so it is very much required for them to learn the balancing system between both. As we know it is the educational institutions where the youngsters spend most of their time so there is no lack of certainty that these institutions and the curriculum applied there can shape the future of the young ones. Therefore it is the duty of the institutions, government, and educational bodies to design such a curriculum, which can make the learners, learn how to maintain the balance and help them to develop holistically. The New Indian Express states, "The holistic approach to education develops a learner's social and academic maturity to accept life's challenges, build their understanding, and learn from their errors." This simply means it makes them learn to manage and balance their life. One of the greatest examples of such an agenda is the Happiness Curriculum initiated by the State Government of Delhi which aims to bring real happiness in the life of children through real practices.

Virtual Education

“**Virtual education** means the use of information and communication technologies to offer educational opportunities to students in a manner that transcends traditional limitations of time and space with respect to their relationships with teachers, peers, and instructional materials.” (*Virtual Education Definition | Law Insider*, n.d.-b)

Though virtual education came into force during the pandemic, however, it is not something very recent. As mentioned by Sarkar (2020), "The first-ever completely online course was offered in 1984 by the University of Toronto." gives weight age that the online platform for education was used decades ago. Even in India IGNOU launched 1st virtual campus in India in 1999. (Wikipedia Contributors, 2024). However, no doubt post-pandemic virtual education has become popular and in demand where the learner sitting at any corner of the globe can gain knowledge through various sources via both synchronous and asynchronous methods. NEP 2020 in pg 58, chapter 24 focuses on, “Online and Digital Education: Ensuring Equitable Use of Technology”.

Benefits of Virtual Education

Virtual Education which is most desired in the current scenario has its own needs and benefits which can be understood as follows:



Flexibility to learn: Virtual Education provides learners with the opportunity to learn with their own needs and speed without any pressure.

Promotes self-learning: Education through virtual platforms generates interest in learning as presents concepts in such a manner that many of the times not possible to understand or imagine so easily

Expand World view: It helps learners to understand one topic through various perspectives.

Sharpens digital skills: The use of virtual platforms for educational purpose not only helps in enhancing knowledge in that particular area but, also in sharpening digital skills. It helps one to become confident in using technology and understand it more productively.

Boon for Introverts: It is noticed that introvert learners generally hesitate to clear their doubts in a traditional class which many times hampers their learning capabilities and later even results in to loss self confidence. However, with the help of online platforms, they can explore and understand which enhances their knowledge and confidence.

Gaining extra knowledge: Virtual education allows them to access and explore more sources which help them in gaining extra and deep knowledge of a concept.

Immediate feedback: Through virtual mode results or feedback of any test attempted or answers given can be received at quite a faster pace. This also helps in performing better in final exams if one gives tests for practice.

Drawbacks of Virtual Education

As every coin has two faces the same way virtual education along with various benefits has some shortcomings which are as follows:

Reduces personal bonding with teachers and peer groups: Real relationships with teachers and peer groups is lost in online classes since they don't have the same physical contact as traditional classroom settings.

Excess Screen time: The blue light of the screen is quite damaging to the eyes leading to problems like Myopia.

Less use of the brain: As loads of information are easily available online so learners avoid brainstorming which causes their memory and brain to lose the power to retain things.

Lack of emotional and social skills: Losing the physical touch is also hampering the emotional and social touch. Less physical interaction makes them self-centered and lose the emotions of sympathy and empathy. They lack the skills of social presentation and emotional connection with humans.

Less physical activities: While in school/institutions learners roam around during breaks, sit, stand, play, dance, do aerobics and exercises and various other physical activities keep them fit both mentally and physically. However virtual classes make them dull and lazy as they sit in a corner and access the information which sometimes results in various health hazards.

Overeating habit: Sitting in one place makes the learners habituated to munching and overeating which is not beneficial to health.

Virtual World

A virtual world is a computer-simulated representation of a world with specific spatial and physical characteristics, and users of virtual worlds interact with each other via representations of themselves called "avatars." (*Virtual Worlds!*, n.d.)

A virtual world is an environment on the internet where people can meet and explore all sorts of things. In the virtual world, a person can present himself in any form and it can be related to the real world or even to fantasy. Here two or more people can communicate with each other using text, sound, graphical images, gestures, and sometimes even allow to use voice and touch. Virtual worlds also differ between themselves.

Education and Virtual World

With reference to education virtual world is available by various names like Active Worlds Educational Universe, ScienceSim, Heritage Key, and many more. Learners from various parts of the globe can work together on a project. A learner can practice a foreign language by virtually practicing with others, touching and feeling the planets, going back in time, and submerging in the history of the Mughals or Chandragupta. A person can also visit any place on the globe which not even exists during the current period. Learners can do scientific experiments or learn to react in a dangerous simulated situation and even play a virtual musical instrument. Thus virtual world has its virtual reality. Metaverse schools are the best examples of virtual education through the virtual world.

The advantage of virtual world education is that here the learner feels that he is learning in a real situation where he/she can feel and visualize the concepts so naturally that he gets involved in it with great interest. The virtual world in the education system helps to gain interest and learn concepts more realistically with the use of more sensory organs. It helps in better knowledge retention and facilitates learner engagement in a better way. Here the learners rehearse in real-life settings and form a positive attitude towards learning which boosts their confidence and enhances their interest, knowledge, expertise, and ability. Education in the virtual world can be a real fun for learners.

Contradictory to the above points when a learner gets indulged in the Virtual world deeply the learner is unable to differentiate between real and virtual reality. Virtual worlds are immersive



which makes the learner enjoy it to such an extent that he feels lonely and emotionally disconnected from the real world. Learner also does not want to face the real challenges of the world and keeps enjoying the virtual world which makes him addicted to the same. Sometimes due to immaturity and lack of knowledge learners share such data which gets hacked and results in harmful situations. As the learner is free to access the platforms he sometimes is not able to follow time management also some misleading platforms may provide wrong information which may generate a criminal mindset in the immature students.

Education as a tool to balance between the virtual and real world

Such contradictions can be handled through the education system itself. Education is the most powerful tool to train a mind, body, and soul and prepare a person to face real-life situations. So to maintain the equilibrium between virtual education and traditional education the education system must aim for holistic development. It is not a hyperbole if we say that curriculum is the spinal cord of the education system and so to make the learners gain more knowledge without any loss a proper curriculum is required to be implemented. The happiness curriculum of the Delhi Government can be an example of such a course which helps to maintain equilibrium in life.

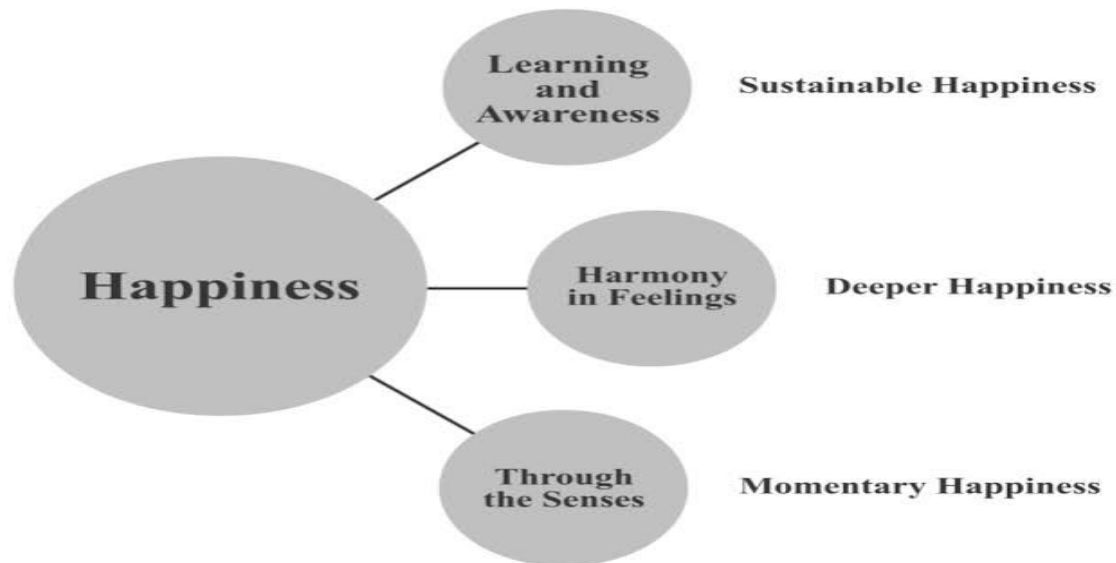
Happiness Curriculum

The Happiness Curriculum (HC) represents the initial systemic measure towards the comprehensive development of all students within the framework of formal education. This curriculum introduced by His Holiness the Dalai Lama in 2018, is the first of its kind to emphasize daily instillation of social-emotional learning and mindfulness. (Happiness Class, Delhi Government, n.d.) It was implemented in more than 1000 Delhi government schools, with over 800,000 students from kindergarten to grade eight.

Happiness Curriculum is a flagship initiative of the Delhi government that reframes the goal of education from traditional pedagogy and practice to the development of self-assured, conscientious, responsible, and joyful individuals who will collaborate to create a happy and peaceful society.

It is based on the co-existential philosophical theory of A Nagraj(1999) and designed on the model of the Happiness Triad which consists of:

1. Momentary Happiness is obtained through the five senses and is tremendously pleasurable but has a very small life duration.
2. Deeper Happiness is the second one which is obtained through harmony in relations and feelings. It stays for quite a longer duration and helps develop feelings and preserve relations.
3. Sustainable Happiness which develops through understanding and awareness takes a long time to achieve but once obtained it stays for a very long time or even a lifetime.



Source: Happiness Curriculum Framework, 2019

According to the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), "the Happiness Curriculum is an endeavor to guide students' attention towards exploring, experiencing, and expressing happiness in not just the momentary but deeper and sustainable forms as well." As a result, the learner will be able to comprehend happiness in relationships, society, and oneself. This makes it possible for the learner to undergo a paradigm shift, moving from using their senses to find happiness outside of them to being able to secure it within themselves through awareness and education while upholding their values.

Objectives of the Happiness curriculum: (SCERT-Delhi &DoE, 2019,p.14)

The objectives of the happiness curriculum are as follows:

- To expand mindfulness and consciousness about oneself among the learners.
- To instill the skills of critical thinking and query among the learners.
- To facilitate the students with effective communication skills and confidence of creative and unreserved expression without any assistance.
- To assist the students in building up empathy within them, realizing their expectations in a relation , and maintain a strong relation with friends, family and educator.
- To make the students ready to manage contradictory and demanding conditions with help of life skills application as per need.
- To engage the students for participating in significant contributions to society by building up societal alertness & and human values in them.

- To develop in learners a holistic advancement towards education in a universal perspective.

The objectives of the Happiness Curriculum are to build life skills among learners which further helps them to understand and differentiate between right and wrong, good and bad, and make the right decision.

Class structure and Pedagogical approach of Happiness Curriculum

The class structure of the Happiness Curriculum consists of a compulsory 40 minutes class daily which includes

1. **Mindfulness:** It helps learners to become aware of their thoughts, ideas, feelings, and environment. Practice of mindfulness helps to stay calm during adverse situations and capable of making decisions which also helps in the improvement of academic life as well as gaining social and emotional stability. On Monday the class is specially focused on mindfulness while on other days check-in during starting of class and check-out when class ends a daily practice of 3-5 minutes is conducted which includes paying attention (dhyana) to breathing, sounds, and other things.
2. **Stories:** NEP 2020 gives importance to Storytelling pedagogy which is an essential part of the Happiness Curriculum. The stories are inspirational real-life stories that help students understand what happiness is all about by assisting them in recognizing their needs to cultivate faith, acknowledge equality, and grow up to be content and sensible which will result in contented families and communities, space, and nature.
3. **Activities:** Again NEP 2020 supports activities for both mental and physical development. The main goal of activity classes is to encourage learners to reflect, comprehend, and have further conversations about them with their peers. To instill in pupils rationality and assist them in viewing objects and events as they are. There are events held to give students room to analyze their ideas and think critically and concepts by using reason and logic and cultivating precision. Additionally, it helps them to think creatively and make thoughtful choices.
4. **Expression:** NEP 2020 considers expression as a major competency required for the development of learners and contributes to individual and social well-being. (p.53). As per the Happiness curriculum, Individuals' sentiments have been viewed in Expressions classes as the manifestation of universal human values, such as "gratitude, trust, respect, affection," etc. The focus of the expression is the students' individual experiences of being in relationships. (SCERT, Delhi, 2023) expresses, "According to the teacher handbook, human beings are called 'vyakti' because of their ability to express their understanding and feelings (vyakt karna)." (p.56)

The happiness curriculum fulfills the guidelines of NCF (2005) as it connects knowledge to life outside school. It develops in the student's consciousness and awareness, and it becomes a contributor to society. Instead of the rote method, students learn through hands-on activities,

experimentation, discussion, questioning, introspection, and many other ways. Also to add the best part is overall development which is also supported by NEP 2020, "NEP 2020 "The aim of education will not only be cognitive development, but also building character and creating holistic and well-rounded individuals equipped with the key 21st century skills." p.12

Happiness curriculum offers a variety of activities that can make the learner understand, manage, evaluate, and think critically so that the learner can take benefit of all resources but not lose the identity of one. The following interventions are part of the Happiness Curriculum

- Meditation has been incorporated to encourage mental wellness and tranquility of mind
- To increase involvement via the use of fun learning activities.
- Indoor games ought to be started to promote active and honest listening skills.
- Group conversation to encourage free speech and tolerance for others.
- Practice skits to develop the habit of empathy.
- Group presentation was incorporated into the curriculum to improve public speaking and reduce stage fear.
- Other initiatives to foster teamwork and rapport have also been started.

These activities make the learners get involved in real-life activities where the learner comes in physical contact with teachers and peer groups and forms emotional and social bonds with them. Discussion, question answers, and other activities help the learner to brainstorm and think critically which boosts their memory and thinking power and their ability to understand others' views. The real-life fun makes the learner rely less on virtual enjoyment while expression and discussion remove the fear within him/her and gain confidence to question where they want. Meditation helps him to have control over his desires and not to overindulge or get over-obsessed by any materialistic things.

Conclusion

The concept of Delhi's educational reform is a revolution in the field of education for every child. The curriculum emphasizes on student satisfaction and holistic development. In a nutshell, it can be said that Happiness Curriculum makes the learner ready for the future by understanding real-life situations. So if such curriculum is implemented it will help the learners to maintain an equilibrium between real and virtual education and life. Happiness curriculum does not pressurize students to perform for numbers which makes them understand the essence of the curriculum. Students without any paper pen or any other equipment pay attention completely in the real world without fantasizing about anything. This helps the students to understand that virtual education is just a platform for their development and not the platform of life. Thus, controlling them to get addicted and run after unrealistic happiness but to gain real happiness which is the actual goal of a human life. This makes us sure that the Happiness curriculum in the phase of virtual education is the need of the situation, the need of the generation, and the need of the hour.

Bibliography

1. Elbanna, A., & Elbanna, A. (2023, May 17). Importance of virtual Learning: a hype that changes education. Skolera LMS Blog. <https://blog.skolera.com/importance-of-virtual-learning/>
2. Happiness Class | Delhi Government. (n.d.). <https://happinessdelhi.blogspot.com/>
3. Happiness Curriculum (CHVTl) | State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT). (n.d.). <https://scert.delhi.gov.in/scert/happiness-curriculum-chvtl>.
4. NCERT (n.d.) National Curriculum Framework 2005. <https://ncert.nic.in/pdf/nc-framework/nf2005-english.pdf>.
5. NEP 2020 Curriculum and Pedagogy in Schools: Learning Should be Holistic, Integrated, Enjoyable and Engaging. (n.d.). <https://shikshan.org/nep-2020/curriculum-pedagogy/>
6. <https://oecd-opsi.org/innovations/the-happiness-curriculum-inculcating-mindfulness-and-social-and-emotional-learning-amongst-students-every-day/>
7. Sarkar, S. (2020, May 16). A brief history of online education. Adamas University. <https://adamasuniversity.ac.in/a-brief-history-of-online-education/>
8. Sarkar, D. (2022, July 21). Holistic development for Students: Meaning & Importance. iDreamCareer. <https://idreamcareer.com/blog/holistic-development/>
9. SCERT-Delhi, & DoE. (2019). Happiness Curriculum. State Council of Educational Research and Training and Directorate of Education. http://www.edudel.nic.in/welcome_folder/happiness/
10. HappinessCurriculumFramework_2019.pdf
11. SCERT-Delhi, & DoE. (2022, March). Happiness Curriculum: Theory, Practice and Way Forward. <https://dreamadream.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Happiness-Curriculum-Theory-Practice-and-Way-Forward-1.pdf>
12. SCERT-Delhi (2023, March). The Pursuit of Happiness in Education : A Research Report https://scert.delhi.gov.in/sites/default/files/202305/happiness_study_2022_v0.26_1_compressed.pdf
13. Virtual education Definition | Law Insider. (n.d.-b). Law Insider. <https://www.lawinsider.com/dictionary/virtual-education>
14. Virtual worlds! (n.d.). <https://cs.stanford.edu/people/eroberts/cs201/projects/2007-08/virtual-worlds/history.html#:~:text=A%20virtual%20world%20is%20a,of%20themselves%20called%20%E2%80%9Cavatars.%E2%80%9D>
15. Wikipedia contributors. (2024, March 3). Indira Gandhi National Open University. Wikipedia. https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indira_Gandhi_National_Open_University
16. 3DLES Metaverse & Education. (2014, September 25). Education in Virtual worlds - 3DLES [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NKzcSoD-QCc>