

# NEP 2020: Mental Health and Emotional Well Being of Students and the Changing Role of Teacher as Counsellor

Mrs. Betsy Shijomon

Research Scholar

School of Management Studies

G H Raisonni University Amravati

Contact: 94236 80340

Dr. Mahek Iram Qureshi

Assistant Professor

School of Management Studies

G H Raisonni University Amravati

Contact:8087925874

## 1. Abstract:

*The New Education Policy (NEP), which was finally unveiled after 34 long years, has advanced significantly in this direction, and is predicted to revolutionize the educational system. Even if this new educational programmed is still in its infancy, it is commendable only to have the idea of keeping track of the students' psychological health. A youngster should not be overloaded with information; instead, their body and intellect should be fully developed feasible. The success in students' lives and the quality of their education are both directly correlated with their mental health. Reaching developmental and emotional milestones, developing good social skills, and learning coping mechanisms are all important components of childhood mental health. Children that are mentally healthy enjoy life more and are better able to contribute to their families, their communities, and society at large. A person's mental health offers them a sense of self-worth, control, and comprehension of how their body and mind work. Since schools are where students spend most of their active time, they have the power to*

*improve the nature and scope of mental health interventions, fill in any gaps, increase their effectiveness, deal with issues before they become serious, and lessen stigma associated with mental illnesses. The author of this study has stressed the value of mental health and wellbeing as well as the need for counselling to address the problems. By providing their unwavering support and encouragement as well as by fostering an inspiring environment, teachers can make a big contribution to the school counselling programme.*

**Keywords: Mental Health, NEP, Education Policy**

## 2. Introduction:

The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020, announced after 34 long years has brought about a monumental change in the new educational policy of our country. It has placed high priority and high importance for physical and mental health for students. Even though the policy is in the budding stage it is our duty to appreciate the policy framers and developers to think of student's health holistically. In addition to regular

school schedules, there are also several new programs that have been put down by the policy to holistically take care of health. Good health is vital to human happiness and well-being that contributes significantly to prosperity and wealth and even economic progress, as healthy populations are more productive, save more and live longer. For a healthy life style, we need a healthy and balanced diet, good hygiene habits, staying in a proper shelter and getting enough sleep. In addition, physical activities, weight management, and stress management activities are essential. Health is the body's functional and metabolic efficiency and ability to adapt to the physical, mental, and social changes in the surrounding. It means the safety of the body from physical, social, and mental disorders.

## **2.1 What is a Mental Health?**

Mental health is an integral and essential component of health. The WHO constitution states: "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."

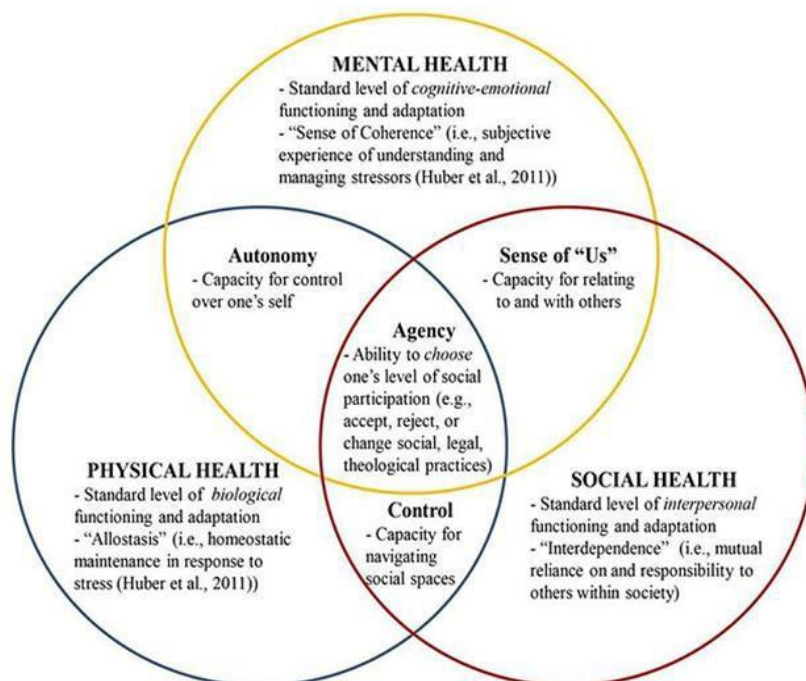
A trans- domain model of health (**Figure1**) gives the comprehensive definition for all aspects of health. This model is built on the three domains of health as described by WHO and Huber, et-al. There are three domains of health (i. e. physical, mental, and social), each of which would be defined in terms of a basic standard of functioning

and adaptation. There are four dynamic areas of integration or synergy between domains and examples of how the core concepts of mental health could be used to define them. Some other definitions are also given here to broaden the understanding of the concept of mental health. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2019) mental health is "A state of wellbeing in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to contribute to his or her community."

It is an integral and essential part of overall health, which can be defined in at least three ways – as the absence of disease, as a state of the organism that allows the full performance of all its functions or as a state of balance within oneself and between oneself and one's physical and social environment (Sartorius, 2002). The Society for Health Education and Promotion Specialists (SHEPS, 1997) suggests that mental health also involves feeling positive about oneself and others, feeling glad and joyful and loving. Mental health, like mental illness, is also affected by biological, social, psychological and environmental factors. The Mental Health Foundation (MHF, 2008) notes that, mental health is defined by how individuals think

and feel about themselves and their life, and that it affects how an individual copes and

manages in times of adversity.



**Figure-1: Trans- domain Model of Health built on the three spheres of health as described by WHO (2015) and Huber, et- al (2011).**

## 2.2 What is Emotional Well-Being?

Emotional well-being is an important part of holistic wellness, as it can impact your outlook on life, your relationships, and your health. Emotional well-being is the ability to produce positive emotions, moods, thoughts, and feelings, and adapt when confronted with adversity and stressful situations. Emotional well-being simply means to be in tune with the emotions and vulnerability of our body. On the other hand, Mental Health refers to emotions, psychological and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel and act and how we relate to others and make choices. Everything in your life- emotional, social,

spiritual, physical, and intellectual- connects in a state of well-being.

Emotional well-being means feeling good, being happy, experiencing positive emotions like love, joy or compassion, and feeling generally satisfied with life. Spiritual Wellbeing can include feeling connected to a higher power, a sense of meaning or purpose or feelings of peace or transcendence (Well Being Victoria, 2021). The World Health Organization describes wellbeing" as a "resource for healthy living" and "positive state of health" that is "more than the absence of an illness" and enables us to function well: psychologically, physically, emotionally

and socially. In other words, wellbeing“ is described as “enabling people to develop their potential, work productively and creatively, form positive relationships with others and meaningfully contribute to the community” (Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project 2008). Wellbeing has

many components, such as mental, psychological, social, emotional, and spiritual. Feelings of happiness, contentment, enjoyment, curiosity, and engagement with their community, are characteristic of someone who has a positive experience of their life (**Figure2**).

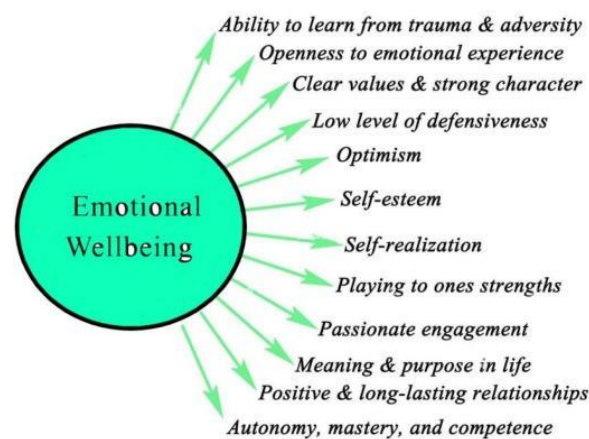
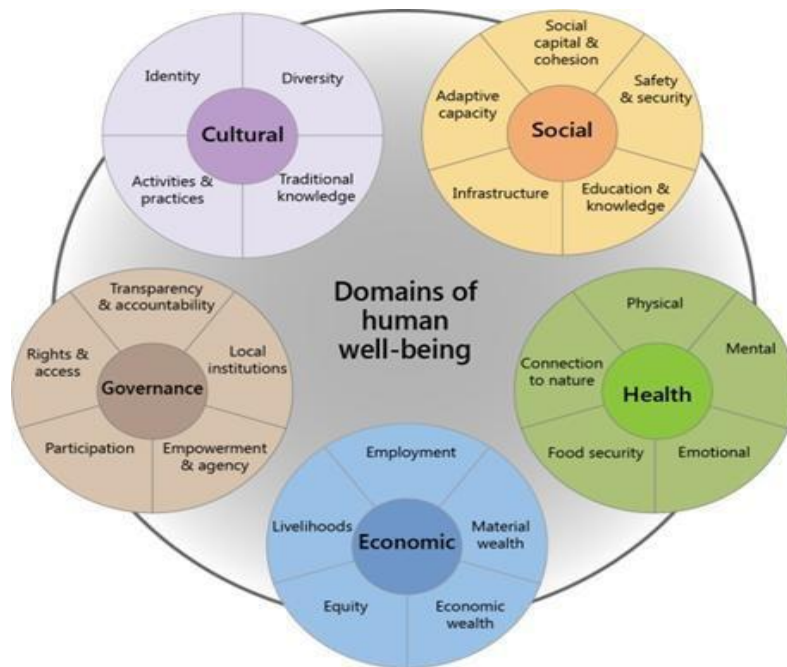


Figure- 2: The Components of Well Being for exploring and maintaining positive relationships, having some control over one’s life and having a sense of purpose, self-esteem and self-confidence. (After Dreamstime.com, 2022)

According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2015), mental health is “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to contribute to his or her community” Emotional well-being refers to the emotional quality of an individual's experiences. It is influenced by a variety of psychological, demographic, economic, and situational factors. Emotional Wellbeing means feeling good, being happy, experiencing positive emotions like love, joy or compassion, and feeling

generally satisfied with life. The major domains of the human wellbeing are depicted in the **Figure 3**.Further, wellbeing in childhood goes on to predict future well-being in adulthood (Richard, M. and Huppert, FA, 2011).A measure of well-being must encompass all the major components of well-being and cannot be simplified to a unitary item of income, life satisfaction, or happiness (Ruggeri, et-al, 2020).Psychological well-being is, however, compromised when negative emotions are extreme or very long lasting and interfere with a person’s ability to function in his or her daily life (Huppert,

2009).



**Figure- 3: The domains of Human Well Being as described by Kaplan-Hallan and Bennet (2017) forexploring diverse relationships between humans and the environment.**

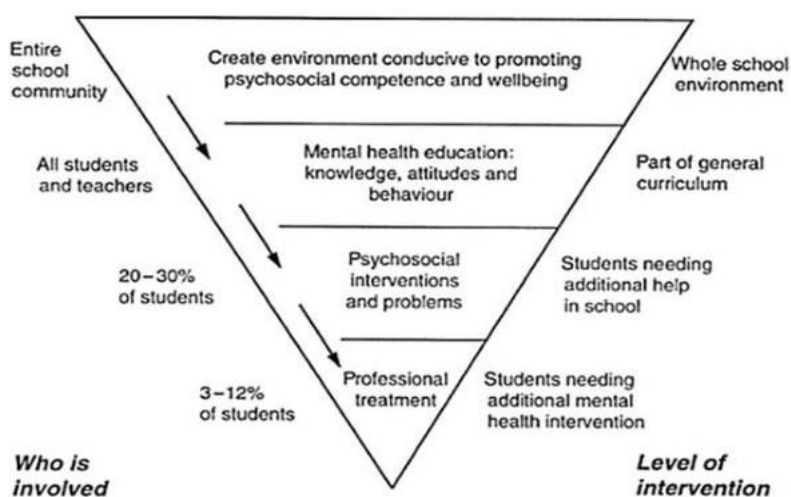
### 2.3 Mental Health in Schools:

Schools are places where the students come together and spend most of their time with peers and teachers. Schools and early education settings have a key role in promoting mental health in all children and young people, and to assist those who may be at risk of developing mental illness. Schools play a key part in children's development, from peer relationships and social interactions to academic attainment and cognitive progress, emotional control and behavioral expectations, and physical and moral development (Fazel, et-al, 2014). All these areas are reciprocally affected by mental health. Increase in recognition of the

effect of mental health problems on academic achievement, and the unique platform that schools can offer in access to and support for children and adolescents with psychological difficulties, has led to an expansion of school-based mental health interventions in high-income countries. School-based mental health can be defined as "any mental health or substance abuse service or programmed that can be delivered in a school setting" (Boudreau, et-al, 2009). Thus, schools present significant opportunities for delivering mental health promotion, prevention and support efforts to students (Patel, et-al, 2013).

The World Health organization has set out models for mental health promotion in schools. The schools need to focus on safe environment, social and emotional learning, family, and community awareness and building capacity to promote emotional wellness. The World Health organization has set out models for mental health promotion in schools. **Figure4** below highlights the actions that maximize mental health and well-being of whole

communities and individuals by improving social, physical, and economic environments- strengthening the understanding and the skills of individuals to support their efforts to achieve and maintain mental health (Wyn, et -al, 2000). In this figure the widest part of the triangle represents the emphasis which the whole-school approach places on creating an environment which is „health promoting“ for all stakeholders.



**Figure- 4: The World Health Organization’s four-level, whole-school approach to school change and to promote mental health and wellbeing among young people.**

India has the largest number of children and adolescents in the world. It constitutes almost a third i.e., more than 2.2 billion individuals of the world’s population (Barry, et-al, 2013). Along with the ease of accessibility and affordability, mental health services become a multidisciplinary object that involves teachers, families, mental health service providers, and school administrative bodies. To enrich the School Mental Health continuum to its fullest, the extended stakeholders such as business leaders, journalists, advocates, and the legislators need to be involved too. An

integration of all primary caregiving systems and their coordinated efforts fosters the overall mental health of students.

#### **2.4 Need for Counselling in Schools:**

It is estimated that around 20% of the world’s adolescents have a mental health or behavioral problem. Of these 50% of mental, behavioral, and psychological problems have their onset during adolescence period (Kessler, et-al, 2005). There is growing evidence of increased psychological problems in children and adolescents especially behavior problems

and suicides. The prevalence rate of psychiatric disorders in India is 12.5% among children aged 0-16 years and 12% among the 4-16 year's children (Srinata, et-al, 2005). As per the National Mental Health Survey, the prevalence of psychiatric illness was about 7.3% in adolescents aged between 13-17 years. Depression, anxiety disorders, substance use disorder, attentive deficit hyperactive disorder, conduct disorder are the common psychiatric illnesses in children and suicide is the leading cause of death in the adolescent age group in India (GOI, 2016).

India has a huge burden of mental health disorders, which is posing a serious threat to the health of the nation. The prevalence of mental health disorders in India was 10.6% in the year 2016 according to the National Mental Health Survey Reports (Gururaj, et- al, 2016). It is estimated that about one in twenty people in India suffer from depression. Also it is to be noted that India has one of the highest suicide rates in the world (Patel, et-al, 2012). A study published in the Lancet Journal revealed that, about one third (i.e. 37%) of global suicide deaths among women and about one-third (i.e. 24%) of global suicide deaths among men occur in India (Vos, et-al, 2017).

Therefore, empowerment of children adolescents is very essential in today's context in India as there is rapid globalization and urbanization with

breaking up of joint families and the traditional social support systems. It has also been estimated that about 150 million mentally ill people in India need health care interventions. Most of the risk-taking behaviors and psychological problems among children and adolescents emerge during adolescent period which can be preventable through universal preventive and promotive school mental health programmed. Crime, violence, sexual permissiveness, drug abuse, academic competition, bullying, and school dropout are on the rise among the youth. These problems have strong impact on their participation in the classroom, scholastic achievement, relationship issues, mental health, and psychological wellbeing. Promoting competencies has the potential to prevent high risk behaviors, psychological problems and enhance resilience among the children and adolescents.

## **2.5 Importance of Mental Health Counselling in Schools:**

Awareness of self, mindfulness, having the potential of thinking and feeling the emotions with clarity and comprehending them is a part and parcel of human life. Mental health services in India are neglected area which needs immediate and serious attention from the government, policy makers and civil society organizations. In the rural areas it is totally neglected in this regard due to

unavailability of experts, low literacy, socio-cultural barriers, traditional and religious beliefs and stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness (Raguram, et-al, 1996). Mental health is a key part of our successful life and our overall well-being. It refers to the way in which we are aware of our own abilities so we can cope well with the difficulties of life.

Guidance and counselling are an important educational tool in shaping the orientation of child from negative ideas. Hence there is a need for a counsellor to assist the child in molding their future through counselling therapy (Ahmad and Zadha, 2016). Counselling is a way of helping people to solve their own emotional, social, personal, or interpersonal problems and not giving advice or solving problems. Counselling services in schools have been useful to resolve the academic problems of students (Baum and Fleming, 1993), while group counselling has been effective in decreasing student's anxiety (Khodaei, 1997).

#### **Objectives of the Study:**

In view of the NEP 2020 and its inclusion and high priority given to mental health and emotional well-being of students the teachers role becomes more challenging. The author has kept in mind the following objectives:

1. To study the role and emphasis of NEP on mental health and emotional well-being of

students.

2. To identify various areas of mental health and emotional well-being of students and teachers.
3. To study the importance of mental health counselling program and interventions.
4. To study the role of teacher as a counsellor in addition to the traditional roles.
5. To identify the need of the guidance and counselling cell.

#### **4. Research Methodology:**

The present study is mainly analytical in nature as the secondary data has been collected from various sources to obtain real and detailed image of the present theme of mental health and emotional well-being as well as counselling. The research methodology adopted is a combination of qualitative and descriptive type. The secondary data was collected from various sources such as websites, journals, articles, and other online and offline publications

#### **Results:**

##### **4.1: The Status and Emphasis on Mental Health in NEP 2020:**

The human mind thinks both emotionally and rationally. Right from birth, until adulthood, a child undergoes progressive stages of development with cultural, social, genetic and environmental factors contributing towards his/her mental development. Many schools in the developed nations check for the psychological well-being of the students



periodically and the same is reported back to the parents. In this way the emotions and the emotional needs of the child are taken care of (Prakash, R., 2020). An educator's mental health is as important as the student's health. It plays a vital role and lack of well-being amongst teaching will be reflected in the learning levels. This is definitely a difficult task but however it is the duty of all organizations to take good care of their faculties. At the outset, the parents must not set outright expectations on their kids, but rather understand their boundaries and act accordingly. The children must be trained in such a way that they are the ultimate for themselves and every progress they make is just an additional feather to their cap

#### **4.2: The Initiatives by the Government of**

##### **India:**

The adoption of National Mental Health Programme (NMHP) by the Government of India in August 1982 was in many ways a landmark event in the history of psychiatry in this country. Students Mental Health formulates the overall development and architecture of a child's brain through significant early life experiences, relationships, and environment. It shapes capacities for learning, ability to cope up with a range of emotions, future development in context to family, community, and later behavior. According to researchers, more than one million neural connections develop every 5 seconds in the first 6

years of a child's life which creates a foundation of their emotional health. The human mind thinks both emotionally and rationally.

The Ministry of Education has undertaken a proactive initiative, named, Manodarpan'', covering a wide range of activities to provide psychosocial support to students, teachers and families for Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing during the COVID outbreak and beyond. A Working Group, having experts from the fields of education, mental health, and psychosocial issues as its members, has been set up to monitor and promote the mental health issues and concerns of students and to facilitate providing of support to address the mental health and psychosocial aspects during and after COVID-19, through counselling services, online resources, and helpline ([indiaeducationdiary.in](http://indiaeducationdiary.in), November 29, 2021).

#### **4.3: Contributions of Schools in Mental health and Emotional Well-being of students:**

Schools afford a great opportunity not only to identify and support children who are experiencing emotional difficulties but more importantly to promote overall emotional well-being and social and moral development. Schools are imperative in mental health promotion and prevention. School experiences are vitally important in both children's intellectual development and their psychological well-being, and

evidence increasingly illuminates the close connection between emotional health and academic achievement; hence, schools enhance school achievement by attending to issues such as self-esteem and social well-being (Rutter, 1991).

School-based interventions possess a great potential in reducing the risk factors and increasing the protective factors to promote the mental health and well-being of children and adolescents. Hence, a well-timed comprehensive programme, in the schools using teachers as facilitators have the potential for building competencies results in yielding high long term returns on investment on children and adolescent.

Adolescence is a transition phase from childhood to adulthood, which is marked by several biological, cognitive, and psychosocial changes. The characteristics which develop during adolescence involve a tendency to experiment and seek novel experiences, a heightened sense of vulnerability, a low-risk perception, an intense desire for independence, and an inner search for self-identity which gradually shape up their personality throughout the developing years (Singh, 2019). It is a critical period characterized by neurobiological and physical maturation leading to enhanced psychological awareness and a higher level of social and emotional interactions with peers and adults

Thus, conducting mental health activities at school level improves the chances of children's access to mental health or any other services. Their families too feel more comfortable seeking help in a community setting as it minimizes the problems related to transportation, accessibility, affordability, and a perceived stigma associated with it. School settings provide additional opportunities to observe children and intervene directly in school setting if required. This results in clinical efficiency and productivity if mental health services are concerned (Gujar, 2015).

#### **4.4 Teachers role in Mental Health**

##### **Counselling:**

Teachers can help in improving the mental health status of students by detecting preliminary signs of mental health concerns, making appropriate referrals to health professionals, and also by creating awareness on mental health problems among adolescents. The role of teachers' in promoting mental health is related to early detection of children at risk for mental health problems. School-based counselling interventions can contribute to mental health promotion. Teaching socio-emotional skills, such as emotion management, conflict management, problem solving skills can strengthen students' socio-emotional competence and enhance their psychological resilience.

#### **4.5 Necessity of School Counselling:**

Counselling as a profession is a child of the western countries. The Indian society with its

strong family bonds and a warm community feeling and spiritual essence has been providing the shock absorbers in times of crisis and a support system to deal with the various psychosocial issues. Perhaps, this is one reason for the slow growth of the profession of counselling in India (Kodad, S. and Kazi, S., 2014). Counseling as a profession is still in its nascent stage in India as common man is yet to understand the concept of approaching a professional to sort out his problems. There is still a lot of confusion as to what is counseling; why it is a paid service; why only certain individuals are considered eligible for the profession and many more (Mahalaxmi, R., 2013).

#### **4.6 Necessity of Counselling and Guidance Cell:**

The year 2022 is likely to witness a sea change in the field of education- quality of education, nutritional aspects, and mental health of the children. Mental health remains a concern among students linked to the change in mode of education-online, offline- to a change in educational landscape with the NEP-2020 stressors. This is expected to be at the center stage in 2022. To cater the needs of the student's mental health, NEP 2020 has expressed the need to establish counseling systems for handling stress and emotional adjustments among students.

#### **Training of Teachers as a Mental Health Expert:**

Though the Teachers may lack professional

training of counselors, they have a long experience of helping students with their personal problems. They interact with the students daily and can provide personal help and direct them accordingly. Effective teachers possess the traits of a counselor as they have ability to empathize with students, have patience and are flexible with exemplary inter-personal skills, open to new ideas and are aware of the individual differences. Effective Teachers promote positive group interactions in their classes and have a good rapport with the students and parents. Thus, we can say that Teacher's do play the role of a counselor (Mehrotra R, and Yasmeen, M., 2017). Courses on counseling at various levels are now available in most parts of the world; many of these courses are suitable for teachers to attend. In order to prepare themselves for counseling skills an understanding of counseling theory will be helpful to teacher, whenever possible, it is also valuable for teachers to observe skilled counselors in action as well as to have supervision from qualified counselors when putting their counseling skills into practice.

#### **5 Conclusions:**

Education is not about loading a child with information. It is just to develop the body and the mind to the highest possible capability. The New Education Policy (NEP) announced after 34 long years has taken many steps in this positive direction, and is expected to transform the education system in all myriads. The government's

initiative to improve and enhance the mental health of the students would be fulfilled only with the keen involvement and participation of the schools. Every school at the state, district, sub-district, and block level must take the ownership. School counseling would lead to the adoption of a school curriculum promoting not only intellectual development but also personal and psychological development. It must be noted that children, especially those going through puberty are extremely vulnerable mentally and the parents/guardians need to tread with caution while listening to their children's problems. Creating an atmosphere of understanding and openness is a key if you want your child to be mentally fit and healthy. According to experts, psychological problems such as gadget addiction, insomnia, suicide attempts, depression, anxiety, gaming addiction, substance abuse, relationship problems, conflict with parents, learning and behavioral problems are on the rise. Therefore, having counselors at school is not an option anymore; it is a necessity.

Thus, roping in psychologists in school, accommodating queer people in classrooms, teachers educating themselves about their students' health conditions, teacher, and student sensitization towards survivors of abuse and trauma, the practice of consented conversation between teacher and student, accommodating students with disabilities, cleaner toilets and sanitary resources for girls, etc. are some areas

policy recommendations that can be added to NEP2020.

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