



ISSN: 2456-0057

IJPNPE 2018; 3(1): 1696-1699

© 2018 IJPNPE

www.journalofsports.com

Received: 19-11-2017

Accepted: 21-12-2017

Dr. Satnam Kaur

Assistant Professor, Khalsa
College of Education, Ranjit
Avenue, Amritsar, Punjab, India

Positive psychology: A key to positive education

Dr. Satnam Kaur

Abstract

An epidemic of depression, pessimism and lowered self-esteem in the young generation constitutes not only one of the major threats to mental health, but also becomes a serious social and economic problem. Positive psychology believes that education is the most important weapon in combating and preventing the above identified problems and threats. The purpose of the paper is to present the possibility of the application of positive psychology which is highly interesting and promising trend in the field of education. Positive psychology emphasizes the importance of training the heart as well as the mind in education. Education has always focused on academics and fostering positive character development. Positive education is an approach to education that blends academic learning with character & well-being. The worldwide high prevalence of depression among young generation and the small rise in life satisfaction, and the synergy between learning and positive emotion all argue that the skills for happiness should be taught in schools.

Keywords: positive psychology, positive education, mental health, depression and resiliency

Introduction

Mental depression is the main cause of disability, and is the fourth gravest health problem throughout the world. World Health Organization estimated that by 2020, depression will become the second largest health problem in the world. In the age group of 15–44 years, depression is now the second greatest cause of disability, while suicide is one of the most frequent causes of death across the world, especially for young people (WHO official website, 2010). The foremost proponents of positive psychology (Seligman, 2005 & Myers, 2000) expect an epidemic of depression which will be particularly dangerous in view of the fact that depression increasingly affects younger people.

An epidemic of depression, pessimism and lowered self-esteem in the young generation constitutes not only one of the major threats to mental health, but also becomes a serious social and economic problem. The founder of positive psychology, Seligman (1998), believes education is the most important weapon in combating and preventing the above identified problems and threats. Seligman (1998) argues that positive psychology alone is not capable of coping effectively with an epidemic of depression in the young generation, but education can be the best help if the findings and solutions developed in the framework of positive psychology.

Positive Psychology

Positive Psychology is the study of optimal wellbeing: what we need to be our best selves. For the past 100 years, psychology has focused on helping those in most need by treating mental health disorders and learning difficulties. By focusing on this specialized area, psychology has become distanced from the lives of most people. In contrast, Positive Psychology reaches out to a wider audience. It is relatively new, but has taken off like a rocket, and now has a substantial evidence base of what helps people to flourish. Positive psychology, a term coined by Seligman, is the scientific study of positive emotions (e.g., pride, joy), positive individual traits (e.g., creativity, hope, optimism), and positive institutions (e.g., schools). It aims to shift the focus of Psychology from examining pathology to understanding and building positive qualities.

The fundamental assumption of positive psychology is that all individuals have strengths and weaknesses and that the strengths can serve as defense for the deficiencies.

Correspondence

Dr. Satnam Kaur

Assistant Professor, Khalsa
College of Education, Ranjit
Avenue, Amritsar, Punjab, India

Positive psychology gives birth to the idea that psychology should not be just about fixing what is broken but also about nurturing unique talents and strengths to support greater overall well being. Positive psychology is different from positive thinking in three significant ways. First, positive psychology is grounded in empirical and replicable scientific study. Second, positive thinking urges positivity on us for all times and places, but positive psychology do not. Positive psychology recognizes that in spite of the advantages of positive thinking, there are times when negative or realistic thinking is appropriate. Positive Psychology is not a one-sided approach. Initially it was focused on happiness only, but more recently the subject of resilience and bouncing back from setbacks have been better understood. Positive Psychology is definitely not a happy clappy approach rather it faces up to the challenges of real life: not only how you get on track to make a good start in life, but also how you can manage challenges if something awful happens.

Positive Psychoogy and Education

Seligman (1998) worked on incorporating positive psychology into education to decrease depression in younger people and enhance well being and happiness. The “Happiness Index” is a welcome concept. It reminds people what works for individual wellbeing, but equally how important relationships are essential to a happy and satisfying life. Positive psychology emphasizes the importance of training of the heart as well as the mind in education. Education has always focused on academics and fostering positive character strength development. Seligman encourages the use of his PERMA Modal (The five elements of well-being) to teach in schools to help the students well-being and making education positive for both able and disabled learners. These are:

- P – Positive Emotions: Feeling positive emotions such as joy, gratitude, interest, hope.
- E – Engagement: Being fully absorbed in activities that use your skills yet challenge you.
- R – Relationships: Having positive relationships.
- M – Meaning: Belonging to and serving something you believe is bigger than yourself.
- A – Accomplishment: Pursuing success, winning achievement and mastery.

Hooper (2012), a Child Psychologist and Parent Coach, based in Winchester, England, having over 30 years’ experience working with children in both public and independent settings asserts, getting things right from the beginning is the best way to create a good life for children. Wellbeing is about having the skills that you need for day-to-day life. Children need to learn how to manage their thoughts, feelings and behaviour so that they can make good choices. Children need to be happy, confident and successful for facing the challenges of life. This self-determination is satisfying and boosts confidence. According to her, there are five core areas of wellbeing, which are needed to be nurtured:

- **Personal Strengths:** The skills and abilities important to us which we choose to use when we can. These strengths are satisfying and also help us to be successful.
- **Emotional Wellbeing:** It keeps us calm and stable and able to get on with life. This depends on our ability to understand and manage our emotions so that we maintain a positive mindset.
- **Positive Communication:** The skills to connect with others and nurture happy, healthy relationships.

- **Learning Strengths:** Learning strengths grow and develop, a child needs learning habits which motivate and help get results.
- **Resilience:** Resilience is the set of problem-solving abilities which help us to deal with challenges.

Positive psychology is best described as the “scientific study of what goes right in life, from birth to death and at all stops in between” (Peterson, 2006). It covers:

- a) Positive subjective experiences (happiness, pleasure, gratification, fulfillment);
- b) Positive individual traits (strengths of character, talents, interests, values); and
- c) Positive institutions (families, schools, businesses, communities, societies).

The underlying theory is that positive institutions facilitate the development and display of positive traits which in turn facilitate positive subjective experiences (Peterson, 2006). Positive education brings together the science of Positive Psychology with best practice teaching to encourage and support individuals, schools and communities to flourish.

Positive Education

Positive education focuses on specific skills that assist students to strengthen their relationships, build positive emotions, enhance personal resilience, promote mindfulness and encourage a healthy lifestyle. It is defined by psychologists both as an education which improves the teaching of traditional subjects as well as an education for happiness.

They maintain that attributes such as psychological resilience, social commitment, and a sense of meaningfulness in life, should be taught to children at school. This would serve as a vehicle to increase satisfaction with life, to help children to learn and to support them in their own development of creative thinking.

School can become a place to enable young people to achieve large-scale development, increase their personal resources and their mental well-being. School seems to be a perfect place for implementing positive initiatives (Prevention and positive therapy) for learning mental well-being as most young people attend schools and spend most of their time at school.

Positive education is an approach to education that blends academic learning with character & well-being. It prepares students with life skills such as: grit, optimism, resilience, growth mindset, engagement and mindfulness. It is based on the science of well-being and happiness. So, positive education through positive psychology promotes:

Human Resource Development

The incorporation of positive psychology in learning environments help the students in fostering their strengths. It serves as a preventative focus, promotes the development of positive institutions, and it makes students more successful. Positive education also shows to have a more lasting impact and change on student’s behavior.

Happiness

Every parent wants the best for their children, they want their children to be happy and flourish. Positive education helps young boys and girls to gain a full understanding of what factors help a life thrive, flourish, as well as teach them some practical skills for everyday use to remain happy.

Decrease Depression

Positive psychology interventions that are used in positive education include identifying and developing strengths, cultivating gratitude, and visualizing best possible selves. Positive psychology interventions do increase happiness and decrease depressive symptoms significantly.

High Achievements

As compared to unhappy students, happier students pay better attention, are more creative, and have greater levels of community involvement. The emphasis on positive psychology interventions in education increases engagement, creates more curious students, helps to develop and overall love of learning.

Better Classroom Environment

Positive education benefits the teacher, too. It is easier to engage the students and persist in the work they need to do master their academic material. It creates a school culture that is caring, trusting, and it prevents problem behavior.

Motivation

Research has shown that motivation may be consistent and long-term if it is always paired with positive interventions. In relation to achievement goals, expectancy beliefs and value it is found that task goals associated positively with optimism results in a highly motivated student.

Resiliency

Positive psychology emphasizes the use of Resiliency to increase students' ability to handle day to day stressors and problems that are common for most students during adolescence. Resiliency promotes optimism by teaching students to think more realistically and flexibly about the problems they encounter. It also teaches assertiveness, creative brainstorming, decision making, relaxation, and several other coping and problem-solving skills. The students who receive positive education are more optimistic, resilient, and hopeful having less anxiety approach towards exams.

Implications in teacher education

A school curriculum that incorporates wellbeing will ideally prevent depression, increase life satisfaction, encourage social responsibility, promote creativity, foster learning and even enhance academic achievement (Waters, 2014).

How does positive education actually apply positive psychology in practice? All the teachers and even staff of the school participate in training programs to learn about positive education and the application into their work at the school and their personal lives. For the children, positive education is applied into every course; for example in art they explore the concept of 'flourishing' by creating a visual representation and their personal understanding. The students also have a regularly timetabled lesson on positive education just like any other class such as mathematics and geography. (Norrish, *et al.*, 2013) [2].

Strength-based interventions also focus on the relationship of the teachers with the students. When a teacher gives feedback, there should be specific feedback about the strength the student demonstrated rather than a vague feedback. Teachers have a big influence on their students in their day-to-day interactions and the simple attention to wording of positive reinforcement makes a difference. Positive education is the development of educational environments that enable the learner to engage in established curricula in addition to

knowledge and skills to develop their own and others' wellbeing (Oades, Robinson, Green, & Spence, 2011). The tenets of positive psychology have emphasized the use of the jigsaw classroom technique, a technique in which students are split up into groups based on shared skills and competencies. Each student is assigned a different topic and told to find students from other groups who were given the same topic. The result is that each group has a set of students with different strengths, collaborating to research the same topic. The influence of positive psychology has even extended to the classroom dynamic. In the ideal setup, the students are given with power for choosing their own curriculum and students are given this responsibility from a much younger age. In these types of classroom settings, students are often treated differently when it comes to praise and discipline. Praise is a more effective classroom motivator than punishment regardless of age, gender, or ability, and when it comes to effective disciplinary practices, positive psychology has its own innovative approach as well.

Conclusion

The rising indicators of depression among young people throughout the world, and their low levels of life satisfaction are the crucial concerns in the educational arena. Positive psychologists have a strong argument for implementing the positive psychology to make the education positive. Positive education may have the potential to be a new model for successful education. The attributes such as psychological resilience, social commitment, and a sense of meaningfulness in life, should be transmitted to children by teaching at school. This would serve as a vehicle to increase satisfaction with life, to help children to learn, and to support them in their own development of creative thinking. School can become a place to enable young people to achieve large-scale development, and increase their personal resources and their mental well-being. School can be a perfect place for implementing positive initiatives for learning mental well-being. Rather than the traditional concept of the teachers simply communicating information to students, students in positive schooling learn through individual goals and by cooperating with other students to have an environment in which students can work towards the same goal together. So, positive psychology can be dealt as the prevention-oriented practice of using empirically sound methods to enhance academic, social, and behavioral competencies of all students by focusing on the students' strengths and resources.

References

1. Authentic Happiness – the homepage of Dr. Martin Seligman, Director of the Positive Psychology Center at the University of Pennsylvania.
<http://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/Default.aspx>.
2. Norrish JM, Williams P, O'Connor M, Robinson J. An applied framework for positive education. *International Journal of Wellbeing* 2013;3(2):147-161.
doi:10.5502/ijw.v3i2.2
3. Official website of the Positive Psychology Center at the University of Pennsylvania.
4. <http://www.ppc.sas.upenn.edu/prplessons.pdf>.
5. Official website of the University of Social Sciences and Humanities,
6. <http://www.swps.pl/uczelnia-wroclaw/seminarium-seligman/diskusje-panelowe>.
7. Official website of the World Health Organization.

8. <http://www.who.un.org.pl/aktualnosci.php?news=330&wid=9.pdf>.
9. Pluskota A. The application of positive psychology in the practice of education. *Springplus* 2014;3:147.
doi: 10.1186/2193-1801-3-147
10. World Health Organization. A Call for Action by World Health Ministers. Geneva 2001.
<http://www.jkp.com/jkpblog/2012/03/interview-jeni-hooper-what-children-need-to-be-happy-confident-and-successful/>