



## INTEGRATING POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY INTO THE NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL POLICY: A FRAMEWORK FOR ENHANCING STUDENT WELL-BEING AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN K-12 EDUCATION IN INDIA

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### ABSTRACT

This paper explores the integration of Positive Psychology into India's National Educational Policy (NEP) 2020 to enhance student well-being and academic performance in K-12 settings. Drawing upon the PERMAH framework—Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishment, and Habits—the study outlines a strategic plan to embed positive psychological principles across curricula, school culture, and community engagement. Despite growing recognition of the importance of emotional and psychological health in educational success, implementation challenges such as inadequate teacher training, resource constraints, cultural stigma, and measurement difficulties remain. By presenting a phased model involving professional development, curriculum integration, school-wide initiatives, and family partnerships, the paper proposes a practical and scalable approach to holistic education. Ultimately, it argues that cultivating well-being is not peripheral but central to the aims of modern education systems, calling for a paradigm shift that aligns policy with the science of flourishing.

**Key Words** – *Positive Psychology, National Educational Policy (NEP) 2020, PERMAH model, student well-being, positive education, K-12 education, emotional intelligence.*

The evolving demands of the 21st century have brought to the forefront the necessity for education systems to go beyond academic instruction and address the emotional, psychological, and social needs of students. India's National Educational Policy (NEP) 2020 reflects this shift by emphasizing holistic

development, experiential learning, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence. While the NEP lays the groundwork for a more inclusive and learner-centered approach, the integration of Positive Psychology can further reinforce its vision by embedding well-being into the core of educational practice.



Positive Psychology, a field that focuses on strengths, virtues, and factors that allow individuals to thrive, offers practical, evidence-based interventions that enhance resilience, motivation, and life satisfaction. In the context of education, these interventions—collectively known as Positive Education—have demonstrated substantial benefits, including improved academic performance, reduced anxiety, and greater social cohesion.

This paper proposes a framework to systematically integrate Positive Psychology into the NEP through the PERMAH model, an expansion of Martin Seligman's foundational PERMA theory. The framework emphasizes the importance of daily habits alongside emotional, relational, and cognitive growth. By aligning educational policy with the science of well-being, schools can serve not only as centers of academic learning but also as environments that nurture flourishing individuals.

## THE INDIAN CONTEXT: NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL POLICY 2020

### Key Aspects of NEP and its significance

After 34 years, a new education policy—the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020—has been proposed by the Government of India to reshape the learning ecosystem in the country (Ministry of Education, 2020). NEP 2020 advocates for holistic development, critical thinking, creativity, and emotional intelligence. It emphasises foundational literacy and numeracy, learner-centred pedagogy, and experiential learning (MHRD, 2020; NITI Aayog, 2021). The policy promotes inclusivity, equity, and the cultivation of ethical and moral reasoning,

thereby acknowledging the multi-dimensional nature of student development (Kumar, 2020).

NEP 2020 envisions future-ready and skilled learners who can succeed at both personal and community levels. It removes rigid boundaries between subject streams, offering flexibility and liberty for students to choose areas of interest and excel in them (Poonia, 2021). The policy further enhances essential learning and critical competencies by promoting discussion-based, analysis-oriented, and experiential approaches (Gupta & Agrawal, 2021). A key goal is to bring over 2 crore out-of-school children back into the mainstream, addressing long-standing challenges of access and equity (Ministry of Education, 2020).

Structurally, the traditional 10+2 format is replaced by a 5+3+3+4 curricular structure, aligning education stages more closely with cognitive development. The policy also integrates vocational education from early stages, introduces reforms in assessment patterns, and prioritises competency-based learning, ensuring that education aligns with individual talent and industry needs (Tilak, 2021). By emphasising skills, creativity, and adaptability, NEP 2020 positions India's education system to meet the demands of the 21st-century workforce while nurturing responsible, ethical, and innovative citizens.

### 1. Positive Psychology Interventions in Education

Positive Psychology interventions (PPIs) in education are structured strategies aimed at enhancing students' positive emotions, resilience, and character strengths (Waters, 2011). The PERMA model, proposed by Seligman (2011),

identifies five core elements of well-being: Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment. Integrating these into educational practices has shown to significantly improve student outcomes (Shankland & Rosset, 2017).

## **2. Benefits of Integrating Positive Psychology**

Empirical studies have demonstrated that students exposed to Positive Psychology practices exhibit higher levels of well-being, reduced anxiety, improved academic performance, and better social behavior (Froh et al., 2008; Norrish et al., 2013). These practices contribute to a more supportive school climate and foster life skills crucial for the 21st century. Positive psychology and the NEP are related in that both address the aspects of well-being and holistic development, though from different perspectives. Positive psychology, with its focus on strengths, flourishing, resilience, and overall well-being (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), provides the psychological foundation to realize the vision of NEP 2020. It fosters self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997), intrinsic motivation and flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), reduces academic stress through resilience-building practices, and enhances inclusivity by recognizing individual strengths. Additionally, it supports teacher well-being and professional satisfaction (Briner & Dewberry, 2007), ensuring classrooms become more engaging and student-centered. Thus, while NEP provides the context for transforming India's education system, positive psychology offers a framework for designing educational programs that promote student well-being, creativity,

ethical reasoning, and lifelong learning. The PERMA model suggested by Martin Seligman can be a valuable tool for educators and policymakers in India as they work to implement the NEP, ensuring that the focus on academic achievement is balanced with the holistic well-being of students.

## **3. Empirical evidence showing shortcomings under the old regime**

India's earlier education policy architecture—comprising the National Policy on Education (NPE, 1986/1992) and the Right to Education Act (RTE, 2009)—succeeded in expanding near-universal access to schooling but faced persistent challenges in ensuring quality learning outcomes. Evidence highlights this gap: the National Achievement Survey (NAS, 2021) reported a sharp decline in average scores from around 59% at Class 3 to only 38% by Class 10 (Ministry of Education, Government of India, 2021). Similarly, successive Annual Status of Education Reports (ASER) have shown that a large proportion of children in primary grades struggle with basic reading and arithmetic skills (Pratham, 2022). At the global level, the World Bank estimated that India's learning poverty—defined as the percentage of 10-year-olds unable to read a simple text—stood at approximately 55% even before the pandemic (World Bank, 2019).

Foundational learning was further fragmented by the fact that Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) for children aged 3–6 years was not part of the RTE's enforceable provisions, leaving this critical stage outside the mainstream schooling framework (Drishti IAS, 2020).

Moreover, issues of ineffective classroom delivery compounded the problem: nationally representative studies documented teacher absence rates as high as 25% on an average school day (Chaudhury et al., 2006, *Journal of Economic Perspectives*). Recognizing these systemic gaps, the National Education Policy (NEP, 2020) seeks to transform the landscape by:

(a) integrating ECCE into a new Foundational Stage under the 5+3+3+4 curricular structure, with an emphasis on mother-tongue/ regional-language pedagogy and a nationwide mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN); and (b) replacing rote-based examinations with competency-based assessments through the establishment of the Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development (PARAKH) (Government of India, 2020).

## **CHALLENGES FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

### **1. Limited Teacher Training and Support**

A significant obstacle in integrating Positive Psychology into education is the lack of comprehensive teacher training. While educators may express interest in fostering student well-being, many are not adequately equipped with the theoretical background or practical strategies needed to implement Positive Psychology Interventions (PPIs) in the classroom. Professional development programs focusing on Positive Psychology are often limited or absent from teacher education curricula. Consequently, teachers may feel overwhelmed or unprepared to incorporate

practices like gratitude exercises, strength-based learning, or growth mindset development (Waters & Loton, 2019; Seligman et al., 2009). The absence of structured mentoring or peer networks further limits effective implementation. Without a supportive learning community or institutional incentives, teachers are unlikely to maintain consistent application of PPIs (Oades et al., 2011; Renshaw & Bolognino, 2016).

### **2. Insufficient Resources and Infrastructure**

Implementing Positive Psychology requires more than motivation; it demands access to well-being curricula, trained facilitators, time allocation, and a conducive environment. In under-resourced schools, especially in rural and economically disadvantaged settings, these conditions are rarely met. Challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, lack of access to mental health services, and high student-to-teacher ratios exacerbate implementation difficulties (Weare & Nind, 2011; UNESCO, 2021). In many such settings, well-being programs are viewed as non-essential, particularly when academic achievement is prioritized under high-stakes examination systems (Durlak et al., 2011; Kidger et al., 2010). Without sustained financial investment and policy support, Positive Psychology risks being marginalized or tokenized.

### **3. Resistance to Change**

Educational institutions are often conservative structures, resistant to paradigm shifts. Traditional views prioritize cognitive achievement, often to the detriment of socio-emotional learning (Duckworth & Seligman, 2005; Briner & Dewberry, 2007). Administrators and

educators may see Positive Psychology as “soft” or unrelated to rigorous academic standards.

Cultural factors also play a role; in many societies, discussions around emotional well-being and psychological health remain stigmatized or undervalued (Hoare et al., 2017; Sahdra et al., 2016). Even when evidence supports the benefits of PPIs in improving both academic and non-academic outcomes, skepticism persists, especially in systems dominated by performance metrics and curriculum rigidity (Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009; Slep et al., 2017).

#### 4. Measurement Issues

The evaluation of Positive Psychology outcomes presents a methodological challenge. While tools such as the PERMA profiler and subjective well-being scales offer some insight, the field still lacks universally accepted, culturally adaptable, and psychometrically robust measures (White & Kern, 2018; Hone et al., 2014). Outcomes such as resilience, optimism, or life satisfaction are influenced by individual perception and contextual factors, making them difficult to quantify reliably.

Moreover, longitudinal studies are needed to determine the sustained impact of PPIs, yet such studies are relatively rare due to time, cost, and logistical constraints (Froh et al., 2008; Kern et al., 2015). This measurement complexity hampers efforts to scale or standardize interventions and reduces their appeal to policymakers who require clear, evidence-based outcomes.

### FRAMEWORK PROPOSED: THE PERMAH MODEL

The **PERMAH model** builds upon Martin Seligman’s foundational **PERMA** framework in Positive Psychology, which outlines five essential pillars for human flourishing: **Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment** (Seligman, 2011). The model was later expanded to include a sixth element—**Habits**—by Kern and colleagues to underscore the significance of sustained, daily practices in cultivating well-being (Kern et al., 2020). Each component of PERMAH contributes holistically to student development and mental health:

1. **Positive Emotions:** Regular experiences of joy, gratitude, serenity, and hope are shown to broaden students’ thought–action repertoires, encouraging resilience and creativity (Fredrickson, 2001).

2. **Engagement:** When students are deeply immersed in tasks that match their skills—experiencing “flow”—they display higher motivation and satisfaction in learning (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

3. **Relationships:** Supportive relationships with peers and teachers are vital for emotional safety, collaboration, and the development of empathy (Noddings, 2005).

4. **Meaning:** Students flourish when they can connect their learning to broader life goals, personal values, and social responsibility (Frankl, 1963).



5. **Accomplishment:** Celebrating progress and success builds self-efficacy and encourages goal-setting behavior, which is critical for lifelong learning (Bandura, 1997).

6. **Habits:** Daily routines such as reflection, journaling, gratitude expression, and mindfulness practice are foundational for sustaining long-term well-being (Kern et al., 2020).

### Step-by-Step Implementation Plan

To implement the PERMAH model in educational settings, a phased and inclusive approach is recommended:

#### 1. Teacher Training and Support

1. Develop professional development modules focused on the principles and application of Positive Psychology in education.
2. Offer personalized coaching and create **peer mentoring systems** to foster shared learning and emotional support among educators (White & Murray, 2015).

#### 2. Curriculum Integration

1. Embed Positive Psychology Interventions (PPIs) into existing subjects through **reflective journals**, **narrative storytelling**, and **cooperative learning** activities.
2. Incorporate strategies such as **strength-based learning**, where students identify and apply their core strengths in school tasks (Niemic, 2013).

#### 3. School-Wide Initiatives

1. Launch well-being curriculums that integrate **mindfulness exercises**, **gratitude walls**, and **weekly well-being themes**.

2. Celebrate "Character Strength Days" or "Kindness Weeks" to embed positive actions into school culture (Waters, 2011).

#### 4. Parent and Community Involvement

1. Organize workshops to educate parents on the PERMAH model and equip them with strategies to reinforce these values at home.
2. Establish regular newsletters or digital updates to share school-wide well-being progress and student accomplishments.

#### Stakeholders and Their Roles

A successful integration of the PERMAH model depends on collaborative efforts among key stakeholders:

1. **Teachers:** Act as primary change agents by modeling well-being principles and applying them in their pedagogy (Green, Oades & Robinson, 2011).
2. **Administrators:** Provide the emotional and structural scaffolding necessary to support staff and sustain long-term cultural shifts.
3. **Parents:** Extend well-being practices into the home, reinforcing learning and creating continuity in values and habits.
4. **Students:** Serve as co-creators of a positive school environment, participating in initiatives and giving feedback to shape well-being practices.



## Implementation Strategies for the PERMAH Model

The successful realization of the PERMAH model in school environments demands strategic and systemic implementation across multiple domains. The following four pillars serve as guiding strategies to embed Positive Psychology as a sustainable and impactful practice within educational ecosystems.

### PERMAH Implementation Plan

#### Delivery

1. **Workshops** (weekly 1–1.5 hrs), classroom integration, peer circles, self-reflection.

2. **Facilitator guided discussion;** ongoing micro-activities (5–10 min daily).

#### Duration

1. **Introductory cycle:** 6–8 weeks (one module/week).

2. **Ongoing practice:** Daily habits + monthly boosters.

3. **Full impact:** 3–6 months.

#### Content (PERMAH Modules)

- 1) **Positive Emotions** – Gratitude journaling, “3 good things,” mindfulness.
- 2) **Engagement** – Strengths identification, flow activities, creative challenges.
- 3) **Relationships** – Empathy circles, team games, active listening.
- 4) **Meaning** – Values mapping, mission statements, service projects.
- 5) **Accomplishment** – SMART goals, celebrate wins, growth mindset.
- 6) **Health** – Breathing/yoga, sleep hygiene, digital detox.

## 1. Professional Development

Establishing Positive Psychology as a **core professional competence** for educators begins with comprehensive and ongoing professional development. This includes:

1. **Continuous training sessions** focusing on the science of well-being, emotional regulation, and student flourishing.

2. Creation of **collaborative learning communities** (CLCs) where educators co-design, implement, and reflect on well-being interventions in practice.

3. Appointing **well-being leadership roles** within staff—such as “Well-being Coordinators”—to champion Positive Psychology efforts and support school-wide consistency.

Professional learning that enhances educators' social-emotional competencies directly improves both teaching efficacy and student outcomes. Research underscores that teacher well-being is a precursor to classroom success and student mental health (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). When educators experience personal growth and emotional resilience, they are more likely to cultivate the same in their students.

## 2. Curriculum Integration

The integration of Positive Psychology principles within academic subjects ensures that well-being is not viewed as an “add-on” but rather an **essential component of learning**. This can be achieved through:

- 1) **Interdisciplinary approaches** where core subjects (like language, science, or social studies)



incorporate themes of gratitude, resilience, or meaning-making.

- 2) **Project-based learning (PBL)** to help students explore personal and societal well-being topics in depth.
- 3) Practical tools such as:
  - a. **Reflective journals** for emotional processing and goal setting.
  - b. **Vision boards** to articulate personal aspirations and identity.
  - c. **Strengths-based assignments** where students apply their character strengths in real-world contexts.

Embedding well-being into everyday learning supports the development of **intrinsic motivation**, creativity, and long-term academic success (Waters, 2011; Niemiec, 2013).

### 3. Creating a Positive School Culture

To truly foster flourishing, schools must move beyond individual classrooms and build a **strengths-based and inclusive culture** that aligns with the PERMAH principles. Key strategies include:

1. **Recognition systems** that highlight effort, kindness, creativity, and collaboration, rather than solely academic achievement.
2. **Student-led initiatives**, such as well-being clubs or peer mentoring, that empower students to take ownership of the school climate.
3. **Inclusive school policies** that promote emotional safety, equity, and mutual respect.

4. Daily **check-ins**, gratitude circles, or mindfulness minutes that create routine spaces for emotional expression and connection.

Such a climate contributes to **psychological safety**, improves prosocial behavior, and fosters a shared sense of belonging (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Seligman, 2011).

### 4. Parent and Community Engagement

The home and local community play a crucial role in reinforcing school-based well-being efforts. To extend the impact of Positive Psychology beyond the classroom:

1. Utilize **newsletters** and digital platforms to share strategies, student success stories, and practical tips for parents.
2. Integrate **parent-teacher meetings** as two-way conversations that include emotional development alongside academic performance.
3. Forge **local partnerships** with mental health organizations, cultural groups, and social services to enhance access to well-being resources.

Research shows that **family-school collaboration** strengthens resilience in students and deepens the cultural relevance of well-being programs (Weiss et al., 2006).

## CONCLUSION

The integration of Positive Psychology into India's National Educational Policy represents a timely and transformative opportunity to redefine the purpose and practice of education. By



operationalizing the PERMAH framework within schools, educators and policymakers can foster environments that promote student flourishing alongside academic achievement. While challenges such as resource limitations, teacher preparedness, and cultural resistance must be acknowledged, they are not insurmountable. With a strategic and inclusive approach—grounded in professional development, curriculum

innovation, supportive school cultures, and community collaboration—Positive Education can become a sustainable pillar of India's educational landscape. Ultimately, embedding well-being into policy is not merely a pedagogical choice but a moral imperative for nurturing a generation that is academically competent, emotionally intelligent, and socially responsible.

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